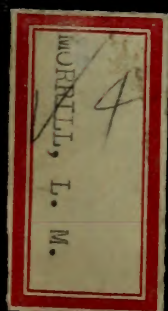




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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

BLESSINGS NOT UNMIXED:

THE POETRY OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

by

Lillian Mabel Morrill

(B.L.I. Emerson College, 1928)

submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter I. The Search for Spiritual Reality	1
Chapter II. BLESSINGS NOT UNMIXED	17
Chapter III. The Poems: Simple Lyrics and Fragments, The Poetry	48
Chapter IV. The Poems: Poems of the Nature, of GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS	74
Digest	160
Appendix	174
Bibliography	177

BLESSINGS NOT UNMIXED

The Poetry

of

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

Introduction

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter I. The Search for Spiritual Reality	1
Chapter II. The Artist	17
Chapter III. The Poems: Simple Lyrics and Fragments, Narratives	48
Chapter IV. The Poems: Poems of the Mature, Confident Artist - Poems of Darkness	74
Digest	169
Appendix	174
Bibliography	177

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page	
1	Chapter I. The Search for Spiritual Reality
14	Chapter II. The Artist
48	Chapter III. The Poems: Single Lyrics and Fragments, Narratives
74	Chapter IV. The Poems: Poems of the Mature, Confident Artist - Poems of Darkness
159	Digest
174	Appendix
177	Bibliography

Introduction

Gerard Manley Hopkins was a Victorian poet unknown to Victorians. The publication of his poems, under the editorship of Robert Bridges, in 1918, created considerable interest in a limited circle of critics and students of poetry who were challenged by the originality and obscurity of the poems. This interest has grown, and continues to grow; but Hopkins is still not a widely-known poet.

It has been the purpose of this study to examine, first, the spiritual struggle which was the strongest force in the poet's life; second, his unusual qualities as creative artist; and third, the body of his published work. His early poems, narratives, and unfinished poems have been treated as introductory to a more detailed commentary upon his more mature artistic production; and for the poems which fall under the latter classification, individual interpretations are presented. Wherever possible, the comments of critics, as well as the personal testimony of the poet and his close friends, have been brought together to contribute to the understanding of the poems.

Introduction

Gerard Manley Hopkins was a Victorian poet known to Victorians. The publication of his poems, under the editorship of Robert Bridges, in 1918, created considerable interest in a limited circle of critics and students of poetry who were challenged by the originality and obscurity of the poems. This interest has grown, and continues to grow; but Hopkins is still not a widely-known poet.

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Since Hopkins is a more or less recent "discovery" in the world of poetry, there exists no definitive body of Hopkins criticism; and among those who have commented upon him there are marked differences of opinion. This has made it frequently necessary for this study either to present conclusions based upon personal judgment, or to leave conclusions to the reader. This situation applies, in particular, to the interpretation of poems about which no criticism has been written. As far as possible, all existing Hopkins material has been examined. Two sources, however, which might have been most valuable, have not been accessible, the volume, Great Catholics, containing an essay on Hopkins by the Reverend D'Arcy, S. J., and the Hopkins number of the English periodical, New Verse.

In the organization of the present work, the material falls naturally into two divisions: first, that which discusses the man and the artist; and second, that which treats the poems themselves. In Chapter I the man and his spiritual problem are considered; Chapter II presents his artistic characteristics; early poems, narratives, and fragments are treated in Chapter III; while Chapter IV attempts the interpretation of Hopkins's work as a mature poet.

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BLESSINGS NOT UNMIXED:

The Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Chapter I

The Search for Spiritual Reality

In 1863, echoes from that tremendous explosion set off thirty years before, and known as the Tractarian (or Oxford) Movement, were still resounding in the great university. Religious thinking had received its greatest impetus in modern times, and the idea of the church had become of central importance in many individual lives. Coming up to Oxford at this time, at the age of nineteen, Gerard Manley Hopkins listened to the three voices - of liberalism, of the "via media", and of Catholicism, and heeded the latter. His experience has rightly been called "a religious upheaval" by his biographer, Father Lahey,¹ for it was only by painfully uprooting habitual modes of thought fostered by a strongly Anglican family background, and sowing in solitude the seeds of spiritual regeneration

¹ Lahey, G. F.: Gerard Manley Hopkins. London: Oxford University Press, 1930. p. 20.

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that he was able to satisfy himself as to God's purpose for him and his own purpose to serve God. On October 21, 1866, he was received into the Roman Catholic communion by John Henry Newman whose sympathy and understanding must have comforted the young man in his pain over his family's strong disapproval of his conversion.

It seems to have been characteristic of Hopkins always to seek the complete experience that called forth absolute self-dedication. Hence, it is not surprising to find him pursuing the consummation of his dedication of faith to its inevitable conclusion, entering the Jesuit Novitiate at Roehampton in 1868. Much critical comment upon the man and his work is marred by vain and feckless speculation as to what his literary achievement would have been had he not assumed the obligations of his religious vocation. Integrity of mind and spirit lifts a few men out of the fog in which the human race attends to its dim struggles into a region of clear and inevitable compulsion. The achievement of such singleness is so rare that it is almost inevitably attended by the misunderstanding which is the world's persistent reaction to greatness. A life of complete dedication to one purpose, a life of utter sincerity, is likely to be misjudged and refused simple acceptance at face value because it departs from experienced patterns.

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Hopkins always to seek the complete experience that called forth absolute self-dedication. Hence, it is not surprising to find him pursuing the consummation of his dedication of faith to its inevitable conclusion, entering the Society of Jesus at Nottingham in 1888. Much critical comment upon the man and his work is warranted by vain and reckless speculation as to what his literary achievement would have been had he not assumed the obligations of his religious vocation. Integrity of mind and spirit lifts a few men out of the fog in which the human race attends to its dim struggles into a region of clear and inevitable compulsion. The achievement of such singleness is so rare that it is almost inevitably attended by the misunderstanding which is the world's persistent reaction to greatness. A life of complete dedication to one purpose, a life of utter singleness, is likely to be misjudged and valued along superficial lines. True value because it departs from experienced patterns.

In his excellent study of Hopkins, Bernard Kelly, S. J., demonstrates an unusual understanding of this singleness: "Sincerity, a unity and clarity of character, forged in him by no light effort of the soul, is the mark of Hopkins the man, and is also the mark of his poetry."¹ Gerard Manley Hopkins had this integrity. What such a man must do he must do. To know God and to worship Him was the compulsion that sent this young man of great intellectual gifts to Roehampton in 1868 and that compulsion operated, without intermission, upon all of his life. Lacking such a centrifugal force, who can say what Hopkins's poetry would have been? Uncoördinated brilliance has been the epitaph of too many poets.

Monastic life is disciplined, regular, and outwardly unexciting. Hopkins delighted in the use of his mind, as his success at Oxford had already demonstrated, and the years spent in study at Roehampton, at St. Mary's Hall, Stonyhurst, (where he returned in 1882 to teach) and at St. Beuno's College in North Wales must have served his intellectual appetite well. In 1877 he was ordained to the priesthood, preached at Farm Street Church, London, and served as sub-minister at Mount St. Mary's College, Chesterfield. During the

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Hopkins's Poems, 1933.

next two years he fulfilled duties as preacher at St. Aloysius Church, Oxford, and at St. Francis Xavier's Church, Liverpool; then came his third year novitiate at Roehampton, and, following his teaching at Stonyhurst, a trip to Holland in 1883.

The last five years of the poet-priest's life, after his election to the chair of Greek at the Royal University in Dublin in 1884, brought to him his most exacting and responsible duties. The high quality of his scholarship won enviable recommendations. In his biography, Father Lahey recalls that "Jowett had called him the star of Balliol and said that he was one of the finest Greek scholars he had ever seen at Balliol, all of which made the Senate of the University extremely desirous to secure his services."¹ The difficulty of arriving at a true estimate of Hopkins's personal reaction to his work at the University arises from the opposite predisposition of the two commentators who discuss it most prominently. It is natural that Father Lahey should minimize the disagreeable aspects of the situation and feel that despite the "triple sorrow" of examination of candidates, an unhappy political atmosphere, and the spiritual bleakness which the latter

¹ Lahey, G. F.: op.cit. p. 139.

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poems reflect, Hopkins was able, nevertheless, to achieve "peace and happiness" in Dublin. On the other hand, Robert Bridges, Hopkins's close friend since their Oxford days and his literary executor, sees the years in Ireland only as a trying and unhappy period of exile. The religious profession was always a barrier between them which Bridges's sympathy could not leap, and he would therefore, place the darkest interpretation upon Hopkins's reference to "the somehow-or-other-manned wreck of the Catholic University", and upon the pain which the prevalent political unrest caused. Bridges feels that the "material contagions" of life in Dublin were directly responsible for Hopkins's death in 1889. An approximation of truth lies, doubtless, somewhere between these two prejudiced extremes. Of his own free will, Hopkins would probably not have chosen to go to Ireland. His love for England was deeply patriotic and idealistic, and his distress over the "Irish rebels", expressed in a letter to Newman, moved the latter to explain that the "rebels" had never acknowledged English sovereignty, and did not, therefore, hold themselves guilty of repudiating it. There is abundant evidence of Hopkins's extreme sensitiveness, and it is quite likely that he was troubled and discouraged about conditions at the University where the dimming of the brightness that Newman had envisioned for it in his Idea of a University was

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only too apparent. That he was not, however, without hope for the future of the University, which was then being revitalized by the Jesuits, is indicated in one of his faithful birthday letters to Newman: "There is scarcely any public interest in the University question. Nay, there is none. But this does not prevent good and really patriotic people in a quiet, but not ineffective way, doing which can be done to advance it."¹ Making the best of a bad situation is a very common life experience, and, in many ways, it seems to have been the one which Hopkins was going through in Ireland. Certainly he must have found stimulating compensation in the companionship that he enjoyed at the University which boasted many able Oxonians in its fellowship, converts with whom he would feel a natural sympathy, and scholars for whose gifts he himself expressed admiration. Had he been elsewhere, the typhoid fever which was fatal to him might not have attacked; yet it would have been possible anywhere; and he had never been a robust individual. All in all, the case against the Royal University and Dublin rests, at best, on carefully selected circumstantial evidence. An affirmative case can be constructed in the same manner. Certainly there is

1 Lahey, G. F.: op.cit. p. 142

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little of dark melancholy in the passing of one who dies, after receiving the final blessing and absolution, with the words, "I am so happy" upon his lips.

Gerard Hopkins himself acknowledged his debt to Milton in the development of the rhythms of his poetry.¹ Recalling the young Milton joyously making his birthday gift for Christ, one finds a spiritual resemblance also between the two poets, opposed though they may be as Catholic and Protestant. The consciousness of God's presence, of His immanence in the world of nature brings a lifting joy to the hearts of both. It echoes in the song of Milton's "Sons of Morning" as they chant accompaniment

"While the Creator great
His constellations set
And the well-balanced world on hinges hung."²

It is like an electric spark to Hopkins whose "world is charged with the grandeur of God"³, and to whom the glittering, starlight sky is the "paling" that "shuts the spouse Christ home".⁴ The freshness of immortal wonder and delight was as a spring of living water in the early writing of both these poets. There can be no

1 Bridges, Robert, editor: Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, London: Oxford University Press, 1930. (Second edition): Author's Preface, p. 3.

2 Milton, John: Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity.

3 Hopkins, Gerard Manley: God's Grandeur.

4 Hopkins, Gerard Manley: The Starlight Night.

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"The virtues of a Christian soul are not so separate that when two or more are become principles of a particular life they can easily be distinguished within that life ... There is very little in the latter life of Father Hopkins that has not intimate and vital reference to his priesthood, and study confirms the same of his poetry."¹

John Gould Fletcher gives emphatic expression to the point of view which attempts the impossible division:

"To an artist of Hopkins's sort, dogmatic orthodoxy, though it may be of assistance in first orientating and disciplining the mind, always ends by finally destroying it. Art, and perhaps more particularly poetry, is a heresy which ends in being more valuable to than any orthodoxy whatsoever, in so far as

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it makes no abstract and dogmatic definitions, but confines itself to the human scale, to that flexible and yet ever-adaptable sense of values that underlies all human experience. If we deplore in a Blake or a Shelley the lack of classical, ordered form that made them incapable of producing major works of completely sustained structure or interest, we must equally regret the narrowing down of theme and treatment that made such a poet as Hopkins incapable, after his first beginnings, of creating major works at all."¹

A similar view is held by Eda Lou Walton, who concludes that "actually Hopkins had chosen a calling in accord with only half his mind, utterly contradictory to his almost morbid sensibility".² Tinged with the same brush, although not so darkly, is this comment of C. Day Lewis: "His will achieved and accepted the subordination of the poet in him to the priest: but his unconscious was permanently rebellious, and on its side fought the whole strength of a deeply sensual nature."³ Lewis notes that the effect of the nervous depression caused by this struggle was "to mar his life and make his finest poetry."⁴

Mr. Fletcher is patently out of sympathy with religious experience; Miss Walton is convinced that the

1 Fletcher, John Gould: "Gerard Manley Hopkins - Priest or Poet", The American Review, January, 1936.

2 Walton, Eda Lou: "Portrait of a Poet", The Nation, July 24, 1935.

3 Lewis, C. Day: "Records of a Great Poet", New Republic, May 22, 1935.

4 Ibid.

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A similar view is held by E. V. Rieu, who concludes that "actually Hopkins had chosen a call- ing in accord with only half his mind, victoriously contra- dictory to his almost morbid sensibility."² Placed with the same truth, although not so deeply, is the comment of G. Day Lewis: "His will achieved and ac- cepted the subordination of the poet in him to the priest: but his unconscious was permanently rebellious, and on the side fought the whole strength of a deeply sensual nature."³ Lewis notes that the effect of the nervous depression caused by this struggle was "to mar his life and make his finest poetry."⁴

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4 Ibid.

religious life is drained of animal receptivity; and
Mr. Lewis sympathizes with a brother poet who has put
himself in prison. The conclusions which they reach
would be justified if Hopkins's poetry consisted only of
those poems, written toward the close of his life, which
have been called "terrible". Is it not rather to reach
a judgment upon the evidence presented by the entire
body of the poet's work? The same man who wrote
"No worst, there is none. Fitted best
of evil,
More puny will, scorned at for puny,
Wilder winns
Conforter, where, where is your comforter?"

wrote also

"Nothing is so beautiful as spring -
When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely,
and lush."

and

"Summer ends now; now, heronade in beauty, the
streaks rise
around; up above, what wind-walks! what
lovely behavior
Of silk-neck clouds!"

It is interesting to note that the lines immediately
above were written in the year of Hopkins's ordination to
the priesthood, when he was conducting his theological
studies in Wales. Writing to Robert Bridges, he says of

I Hopkins, Gerard Manley: Poems, 44.
Spring
Gathering in Harvest

the poem, "The Hurrahing sonnet was the outcome of half an hour of extreme enthusiasm as I walked home alone one day from fishing in the Elwy."¹ There is no evidence here of constraint between the poet and the priest, no withdrawing from the joy that abounds in nature. In fact, the only constraint that ever existed had been removed two years before when The Wreck of the Deutschland had been written with the full approval and encouragement of his Rector. When he entered upon his novitiate, extreme scrupulousness as to the demands of his calling had caused him to burn his verses and to deny himself further poetic expression. This was a self-imposed sacrifice which was not violated for seven years. Then came the realization that there was no necessary incompatibility between poetry and priesthood, and the poet who broke his silence with The Wreck of the Deutschland had achieved a power of a far higher order than anything in his earlier verse had hinted at. Replying to Mr. Fletcher's contention that Hopkins's "choice of the Jesuits was made at the cost of a severe and heavy sacrifice; the sacrifice of his own poetic talent", Mr. James Gerard Shaw very sensibly asks whether the poet who emerged in The Wreck of the Deutschland was "a worse

1 Bridges, Robert, editor: op.cit.
Notes: p. 107

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or a better poet" than the earlier verse had promised.¹ Seven years' discipline seems to have led, not to frustration, but to the development of a fullgrown poet, who "seems to have managed", in the words of Elsie Elizabeth Phare, "a satisfactory union not only of sense and intellect but of sense and spirit."²

That there exists a truly vexing problem in the later spiritual life of the poet is not to be denied. The "terrible" sonnets show an appalling, desolate agony of soul which must be accounted for by students of Hopkins and his work if their aim is even an approximate understanding of the interrelation of personality and work. Two explanations are possible; the first is that toward which those critics incline who believe that the poet in Hopkins was kept in bondage by the priest. Miss Walton speaks of the "conflict between doubt and faith". The implication is that intellect and sensitivity - the poet's attributes - are ranged against an intuitive urge toward faith, and that great unhappiness came to Hopkins because he could not completely believe all that he had dedicated his life to.

1 Shaw, James Gerard: "Mr. Fletcher on Hopkins", The Commonweal, November 13, 1936.

2 Phare, Elsie Elizabeth: The Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Cambridge, The University Press, 1933. p. 18.

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 in the later spiritual life of the poet is not to be
 denied. The "terrible" sonnets show an appalling, deso-
 late agony of soul which must be accounted for by at-
 tention to Hopkins and his work if their aim is even an
 approximate understanding of the intention of per-
 sonality and work. Two explanations are possible; the
 first is that toward which those critics incline who
 believe that the poet in Hopkins was kept in bondage by
 the priest. Miss Walton speaks of the "conflict between
 doubt and faith". The implication is that intellect
 and sensitivity - the poet's attributes - are ranged
 against an intuitive urge toward faith, and that great
 unhappiness came to Hopkins because he could not com-
 pletely believe all that he had dedicated his life to.

¹ Shaw, James Gerard: "Mr. Fletcher on Hopkins", The
Commonweal, November 13, 1936.
² Evans, Miss Elizabeth: The Poetry of Gerard Manley
Hopkins, Cambridge, The University Press, 1933.
 p. 16.

Poetry as cryptic as that with which we are dealing gives liberal license for the reading of meanings into it. For example,

"My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main,
a chief
Woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince ¹
and sing."

may refer to the bitter insistence of doubt over faith. The "world-sorrow" might be understood as man's recurrent failure to achieve the faith for which he yearns. On the other hand, in these "terrible" poems there is evidence of a desperate clinging to faith, of flight to God as the one reality. The agony of the faithful who yet feel alienated from God is deeper and more complex than the struggle between doubt and faith. Not to give up the struggle, not to despair utterly, however cruel may be the testing of God, require a strength impossible without the most stubborn sort of faith. Such persistence is like steel in Carrion Comfort:

"Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not
feast on thee;
Not untwist - slack they may be - these last
strands of man
In me or, most weary, cry I can no more. I can;
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose
not to be."

Poetry as cryptic as that with which we are dealing gives
liberal license for the reading of meanings into it. For

example,

"My cries heave, herds-long; hinds in a morn;
a child
Was, world-sorrow; on an age-old woe
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without the most stubborn sort of faith. Such per-

formance is like steel in Samson's lament:

"Not, I'll not, Samson comfort, despair, not
least on this;
Not untwist - slack they may be - these last
strands of man
In me or, most weary, cry I can no more. I can;
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose
not to be."

If it is reasonable to recognize Hopkins as a mystic poet,¹ why is it not also reasonable to assume that his spiritual experiences resembled those of other mystics following the way of purgation, illumination, and unity? Unity with God is not achieved by the mystic without the suffering of an intense inner struggle during which God seems to have cut Himself off from the agonized spirit. "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!" has been echoed by many of God's children in the agony of separation. The "Divine Darkness", the "dark night of the soul" are familiar terms in the literature of mysticism. Because Gerard Manley Hopkins was able to make this time of stress and torment articulate, we have poems that are agony, poems whose recapitulation of intricate emotional and spiritual experience is the most complete which English poetry affords. Mr. Lewis's tribute to the greatness of these poems is worth noting here: "..... in these agonized pieces his genius reached full stature. They are some of the most poignant memorials of man's capacity for suffering that have ever been built."² Of course, the cycle of this mystic is incomplete, so far as admissible evidence is concerned, although the facts of Father

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Hopkins's death suggest an atmosphere of tranquility, of the struggle ended, and the long-sought peace achieved. It is significant that, despite their grim and tortured subject matter, the "terrible" sonnets demonstrate a sureness and perfection of form which the poet had not reached before, and it may very well be that he was about to leave the deep and tangled mazes of his travail for higher and brighter ground both as creative artist and as child of God. Henry Morton Robinson suggests this possibility on the artistic side: "If Gerard Hopkins had lived, it is quite within the indications of his last period to suppose that he would have emerged from the slough of obscurity into the clearer, if more conventional, region of English poetry."¹

It seems to the present writer contrary to the evidence to regard Gerard Manley Hopkins's religious life as a tragedy, unless there is a general assumption that all highly sensitive people are doomed to tragic lives. He knew exultant heights, and plumbed "no-man-fathomed" depths. One could wish for every young man starting out upon his life's work the happy assurance that runs through the poems written in 1877. There is richness of meaning seldom achieved by poets in the perception of all creation as "showing from within the glory of God

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in every earnest act."¹ It seems illogical to refuse to see the living brightness in a life because the impact of its darkness strikes the roots of our pity. That Hopkins died before the "brighter dawn" had succeeded the "dark night of the soul" makes speculation the necessary extent of all discussion which aims at conclusions; and the speculation ventured here is that the period of desolation that produced the "terrible" sonnets was a stage - fierce indeed and inexorable - in a life highly dedicated to the pursuit of the One Reality.

¹ Blackmur, R. P.: "Text and Texture", Virginia Quarterly Review, Summer 1937.

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Chapter II

The Artist

Turning from these necessary but always impertinent inquiries into the inner life of the artist, we are on more sure and public ground in the contemplation of his artistic products and the techniques which he employed in their creation. The well-posted preserves of Gerard Manley Hopkins's poetry do not encourage the entrance of the aesthetic pleasure-seeker. Readers who attempt the poems and fail to make anything of them cannot complain that they were not warned. Robert Bridges discouraged adventurers in his note on The Wreck of the Deutschland: "..... the poem stands logically as well as chronologically in the front of his book, like a great dragon folded in the gate to forbid all entrance, and confident in his strength from past success".¹ I. A. Richards writes of "Gerard Hopkins, who may be described without opposition, as the most obscure of English verse writers".² Most irreverently Christopher Morley refers to this forbidding critical atmosphere: "What is so appetitive as to be told,

¹ Notes to Poems, p. 104.

² Richards, I. A.: "Gerard Hopkins", The Dial, September 1926.

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as we always are, that Father Hopkins's verse was difficult and screwy and that we couldn't understand it?"¹ Mention of Hopkins to people with a moderately broad background of reading among the English poets is likely to elicit some such response as, "Yes, I've read a few of his poems, but I couldn't make much of them". Amateur practical psychologists who enjoy studies in facial expression can do nothing better than to pass Hopkins's book of poems to an unsuspecting victim with the single request, "Read some of them." The degrees of bafflement and bewilderment that succeed one another are wonderful to behold. This is the common human behavior in the face of the unexpected, the novel. We cannot understand that of which we have no previous knowledge, and since the only way we can gain knowledge of Hopkins's poetry is through the poems themselves and what their highly original author says of them, the task of understanding has grown a very hard shell. That oddness is the vice of originality Hopkins himself has noted, and the oddness which immediately repels the reader accustomed to the ordinary decorums of poetry is the impossibility of reading and understanding at the same time. The insistent rush of the lines at first paralyzes the mind that is groping for familiar relationships as handles

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¹ Morley, Christopher: "The Bowling Green", Saturday Review of Literature, August 15, 1936.

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to cling to; there is virtually no choice but to yield to the energy and ride the crescendos. In his introduction to the second edition of the poems, Charles Williams describes most vividly this urgent experience which is inescapable in the reading of the poems: "They proceed, they ascend, they lift us (breathlessly and dazedly clinging) with them, and when at last they rest and we loose hold and totter away we are sometimes too concerned with our own bruises to understand exactly what the experience has been." The reader must do so much more than share the poet's experience, for that suggests a stale, leisurely second-handedness; he finds himself in the molecular pattern of the glowing metal of experience itself, taking shape on the artist's anvil.

The singularities of the system of prosody evolved by Hopkins almost forbid understanding.¹ Counterpoint Rhythm and Sprung Rhythm, lines "rove over", hangers or outrides, stress and inscape - these are the principal terms in the technical vocabulary which Hopkins uses to explain the peculiarities of his craftsmanship. If the poet had offered no explanation of his technique, his verse would be easier to understand. It is difficult to glean his meaning, but to apply his rules to his lines and to understand their structure thereby, is nearly impossible.

¹ For an abridgment of Hopkins's exposition of his prosody, see Appendix.

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Those who have commented upon his work, have, in general, and perhaps wisely, given it up. It is easy enough to sense the irregularity of movement in the poems which gives to the rhythm a darting, unevenly swooping effect; but ears inured to the customary iamb, trochee, dactyl, anapest, or spondee, cannot listen logically to the rugged unruliness of Hopkins. If we could forget that we had ever heard any other English poetry, and could repeat Hopkins to ourselves day after day, we might achieve, through habitual response, a genuine understanding of this extraordinary prosody. No one, as yet, however, has tried this experiment. Rhythm, being organic, demands organic response, and the proper conditions for organic response to Hopkins's rhythm seem not to exist. That is probably why there is a tendency to consider that his exposition of his prosody was more important to him in the development of his poetry than it ever can be to his readers. He was the first English poet to find the trail to the "free" poetry which became characteristic of the present century. (Walt Whitman was engaged in a similar experiment in America.) For himself and for the few who saw his poetry, it was valuable and necessary, no doubt, to make a careful record of exactly what he was doing as his experimentation progressed.

It is particularly fortunate in the case of Hopkins that a grasp of his prosodic intricacies is not

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It is particularly fortunate in the case of
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essential to the appreciation of his poetry. Much able and intelligent criticism disregards it almost entirely or considers it to be a rather oddly meticulous justification for a departure from tradition. Miss Phare, who considers that Hopkins "united qualities generally ascribed to romantic poets with those said to be characteristic of the classical," remarks of his technique: "His prosodical rules are elastic enough to make it possible to justify any collocation of syllables; it looks as though the ultimate appeal was always to his own ear."¹

I. A. Richards offers the curious and provocative suggestion that Hopkins, in his careful systematization was practicing a kind of self-deception.

"While retaining rhyme, he gave himself complete rhythmical freedom, but disguised this freedom as a system of what he called Sprung Rhythm ... Since what he called hangers or outrides (one, two, or three slack syllables added to a foot and not counting in the nominal scanning) were also permitted, it will be plain that he had nothing to fear from the absurdities of prosodists. A curious way, however, of eluding a mischievous tradition and a spurious question, to give them a mock observance and an equally unreal answer."²

As time goes on and Hopkins comes to be better known and understood, as the growing interest of serious students of poetry indicates he will be, it is

1 Phare, Elsie Elizabeth: The Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Cambridge: The University Press, 1933. p. 7.

2 Richards, I. A.: "Gerard Hopkins", The Dial, September, 1926.

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I. A. Richards offers the curious and provocative suggestion that Hopkins, in his careful system-ization was practicing a kind of self-deception.

"While retaining rhyme, he gave himself complete physical freedom, but disguised this freedom as a system of what he called 'sprung rhythm' ... Since what he called 'sprung rhythm' or 'sprung rhythm' (one, two, or three syllables added to a foot and not counting in the normal scanning) were also permitted, it will be plain that he had nothing to fear from the absorption of prosody. A curious way, however, of attempting a mischievous tradition and a question, to give them a most observance and an equally unusual answer."²

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¹ Phares, Blake Elizabethan: The Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Cambridge: The University Press, 1933, p. v.
² Richards, I. A.: "Gerard Hopkins," The Dial, September, 1926.

quite possible that his system of prosody will be comprehended more fully and serve the important purpose of making the aims and meanings of the poetry clearer. At present, however, few students have achieved a completely happy synthesis of method and meaning. Indeed, there is a strange hiatus between the poet's meticulous explanation of his mechanics and the utter, startling originality of his poetry. It is as difficult to reconcile them as it is to reason about the operation of natural laws when one is confronted with the sudden, astounding leap out of the earth of a geyser. And so this study, like other more capable ones, will not attempt any excursion into the operation of Counterpoint Rhythm, or endeavor to point out instances of the use of Outrides or any of the other peculiarities of Hopkins's technique. Such an account, as Mr. F. R. Leavis has pointed out, "will help no one to read his verse".¹

With one motivating idea which pervades both form and matter, we must, however, concern ourselves. The single word in Hopkins's vocabulary which eclipses all others in significance is "inscape". Used by the poet as both noun and verb, it indicates for him the essential quality of all that he observes and the mold in which his poetry is created. To grasp the meaning of "inscape" is

¹ Leavis, F. R.: New Bearings in English Poetry.
(V. Gerard Manley Hopkins.) London, Chatto and Windus,
1932. p. 167.

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 1932, p. 127.)

to comprehend the urgency, the immediacy, the explosiveness of poetry which has nothing to do with the intermediate and the abstract, poetry which "strikes" the reader, in the actual sense of that word. Robert Bridges's notes give the poet's own explanation of what he means by "inscape".

"No doubt my poetry errs on the side of oddness. I hope in time to have a more balanced and Miltonic style. But as air, melody, is what strikes me most of all in music and design in painting, so design, pattern, or what I am in the habit of calling inscape is what I above all aim at in poetry. Now it is the virtue of design, pattern, or inscape to be distinctive and it is the vice of distinctiveness to become queer. This vice I cannot have escaped."¹

Here the poet is analyzing the purpose of his work. To observe him in the process of "inscaping" we may turn to a passage in the Note-Books and Papers, written nine years earlier:

"..... before I had always taken the sunset and the sun as quite out of gauge with each other, as indeed physically they are, for the eye after looking at the sun is blunted to everything else and if you look at the rest of the sunset you must cover the sun, but today I inscaped them together and made the sun the true eye and ace of the whole, as it is. It was all active and tossing out light and started as strongly forward from the field as a long stone or a boss in the

¹ Notes to Poems: pp. 96-97.

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knop of the chalice-stem: it is indeed by stalling it so that it falls into scape with the sky." ¹

Generally speaking, the observations made by the human senses are notoriously inaccurate. "Intelligent" observation is so rare that, upon first reading the passage from Hopkins's journal immediately above, one is struck, paradoxically, by the oddness of looking at a sunset with the sun as its centre. Yet the sun is the single essential element present in any sunset. Perhaps Hopkins is the only person who has ever seen a sunset completely. It is clear that his "inscaping" is plunging directly into the very anatomy of experience and taking into the mind the essential distinctiveness which sets that experience apart from all others. It might be called the direct opposite of "escaping", in which the mind moves outward without first having possessed itself of the essence of the object under observation. It involves, too, the accurate ordering of relationships, as in seeing the sun tossing out light and starting strongly from the field, so that the final impression is an entity achieved through the marshalling of authentic perceptions.

When Hopkins says that he "cannot have escaped" the queerness which is "the vice of distinctive-

¹ House, Humphrey, editor: The Notebooks and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1937.

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When Hopkins says that he "cannot have es-

caped" the question which is "the vice of disintegrated-

ness" he does not imply that he hopes someday to be able to escape. Rather, he indicates that he understands completely the operation of his own mind, recognizing that for him the ultimate perception of distinctiveness is inevitable. His love for "pied" and "dappled" things springs not so much from a taste for variety as from an understanding of the organic pattern of each element that goes to make up the larger and more apparent pattern of variety.

To observe the operation of "inscape" in the poetry itself, we may turn to the marvellous opening of Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves which captures so remarkably the shifting, merging quality of the passage of evening into night.

"Earnest, earthless, equal, attuneable, vaulty,
voluminous, .. stupendous
Evening strains to be time's vast, womb-of-all,
home-of-all, hearse-of-all night.
Her fond yellow hornlight wound to west, her
wild hollow hoar-light hung to the height
Waste; her earliest stars, earl-stars, stars
principal, over-bend us,
Fire-featuring heaven. For earth her being has
unbound, her dapple is at an end, as-
tray or aswarm, all throughther, in throngs;
self in self steeped and pashed-quite
Disremembering, dismembering all now."

The fleeting evanescence of something which is gone almost before it has begun, the swift condensation of elements within time's mysterious alembic, the multiple-patterned, all-embracing transition - these are the design which evening-end, night-beginning has stamped upon

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voluminous, .. stupendous
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home-of-all, hearer-of-all night.
Her fond-yellow horizon light warm to west, her
wild hollow horn-light hung to the height
Waste; her earliest stars, early-stars, stars
principal, over-hand us,
fire-leaving heaven. For earth her being has
unbound, her dapple last an end, an-
try or answer, all throughout, in strong;
self in self steeped and passed-pulse
disremembering, disremembering all now."

The fleeting evanescence of something which
is gone almost before it has begun, the swift condensation
of elements within time's mysterious alembic, the multiple-
patterned, all-embracing transition - these are the de-
sign which evening-end, night-beginning has stamped upon

the senses of the poet; and that design is created for the reader, mobile, fluid, the essence of the transitory. The sweeping rush of motion is there within the pattern as all nature is hurled toward the inevitable consummation with darkness. For the poet this "inscape" is symbolical, in the final lines of the poem, of the bleakness which strict moral judgment imposes upon the "skeined stained veined variety" of life, a stark world in which the desolate mind, in its solitary darkness, turns ever torturingly upon itself as "thoughts against thoughts in groans grind".

The more one searches for the meaning of "inscape", the more significant the idea becomes to an appreciation of the vital substance of Hopkins's poetry. He has said, "design, pattern, or what I am in the habit of calling inscape is what I above all aim at in poetry." What is design, and what causes it? It is the structure which the life, or creative impulse builds for itself. The eye sees design in terms of mass and line, symmetry and variation; the ear catches it in the flow of rhythm. The senses serve to convey what is apparent in design, but the meaning of it rests always with what has impelled it. Hopkins is unique in his grasp of the source of design, which is not apparent. For him "There lives the dearest freshness deep down things", the inexhaustible source of vibrant, vital springing into form. This source of the

the essence of the poet; and that design is created for the reader, mobile, fluid, the essence of the transitory. The sweeping mass of motion is there within the pattern as all nature is hurled toward the inevitable consummation with darkness. For the poet this "message" is axiomatic, in the final lines of the poem, of the blindness which strict moral judgment imposes upon the "stained stained-voiced variety" of life, a stark world in which the dense-late mind, in its solitary darkness, turns ever torturingly upon itself as "thoughts against thoughts in groans and grinds".

The more one searches for the meaning of "message", the more significant the idea becomes to an appreciation of the vital substance of Hopkins's poetry. He has said, "design, pattern, or what I am in the habit of calling message is what I above all aim at in poetry." What is design, and what causes it? It is the structure which the life, or creative impulse builds for itself. The eye sees design in terms of mass and line, symmetry and variation; the ear catches it in the flow of rhythm. The senses serve to convey what is apparent in design, but the meaning of it rests always with what has impelled it. Hopkins is unique in his grasp of the source of design, which is not apparent. For him "There lives the dearest freshness deep down things", the inexhaustible source of vibrant, vital springing into form. This source of the

pattern of created beauty so important to Hopkins the poet is the same source toward which Hopkins the man strove with all the energy of his spirit. For him the world is indeed,

"charged with the grandeur of God."¹

He kisses his hand

"To the stars, lovely-asunder
Starlight, wafting him out of it;

and

"to the dappled-with-damson west:
Since though he is under the world's splendour and
His mystery must be instressed, stressed." ^{wonder,}²

He lifts up heart and eyes

"Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our
Saviour"³.

These conclusions as to the significance of "inscape" may seem, at first thought, to place too great a burden upon that word, yet to those who believe that Hopkins the poet and Hopkins the priest were not two warring individualities it is reasonable to find the closest kind of bond between what the artist aimed at "above all" in his poetry and that to which the life was dedicated. Although this judgment cannot be documented by exact references from critical commentaries, there is a

1 Hopkins, Gerard Manley, Poems: God's Grandeur
2 The Wreck of the Deutschland
3 Hurrahing in Harvest

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with all the energy of his spirit. For him the world is
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"charged with the grandeur of God."

He kisses his hand

"To the stars, lovely-number
Starlight, waiting him out of it;

and

"to the dappled-with-barnum west;
Since though he is under the world's splendour and
weight,
His mystery must be increased, increased."

He lifts up heart and eyes

"Down all that glory in the heavens to gaze out
Savior."

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1 Hopkins, Gerard Manley, poems: God's Grandeur
2 The Week of the
Deutschland
3 Returning in Harvest

significant passage in Father Kelly's study which is suggestive of a similar point of view:

"The call of Christ in the beauty of this world is a call from the cross, and this is a key to the intellectual vitality of very nearly all the mature poetry of Gerard Hopkins; a vitality not going at a cross purpose to his 'pure poetry', but making that poetry; not crushing the life of the emotions and the senses, but giving them the very juice, and life and direction of their own nature."¹

To the expression of the intensity which resides in the idea of "inscape", Gerard Manley Hopkins brought a sensitiveness equally charged with vigorous life. He was engaged upon an eternal quest for completeness, and could not rest until, in every experience, he had achieved it. The urgency to be at the heart of reality possesses the reader as it did the poet. Sensing the Divine Essence in all created things, he was a disciple of Duns Scotus, "who of all men most sways my spirits to peace". Scotus was for him "of realty the rarest-veined unraveller". Hopkins's extraordinary ability in observation may bear a very real kinship to the Scotian principle of attention, in close alliance with the will, as a prerequisite for knowledge, just as the source of the Hopkins "inscapes" is suggestive of the Scotist belief in the successive growth of form from the force of matter. Powers of observation

¹ Kelly, Bernard, S. J.: The Mind and Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J., London: Pepler and Sewell (St. Dominic's Press), 1935.

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J. Kelly, *Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Mind and Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 2 vols., London: Poplar and Jewell (St. Dominic's Press), 1955.

keenly accurate and capable of absorbing the minutest details are coupled in the poet with a force of intuition which flashes like lightning. Clouds he never tired of observing, and it is characteristic of him to have been able to report in intricate detail upon phenomena whose very essence seems to be instability. We feel that we have looked into the sky and seen only blankness when we read a record of observation as close-packed as this:

"At eight o'clock about sunset hanging due opposite the house in the east the greatest stack of cloud, to call it one cloud, I ever can recall seeing. Singled by the eye and taken up by itself it was shining white but taken with the sky, which was a strong hard blue, it was anointed with warm brassy glow: only near the earth it was stunned with purplish shadow. The instress of its size came from comparison not with what was visible but with the remembrance of other clouds: Like the Monte Rosa range from the Gorner Grät its burliness forced out everything else and loaded the eye-sight. It was in two lines fairly level above and below but not equal in breadth - as 2 to 3 or 3 to 4 perhaps - like two waggons or loaded trucks. The left was rawly made, a fleece parcelled in waving locks flowing open upwards, with shady gutters between, like the ringlets of a ram's fleece blowing; the right was shapely, roped like a heavy cable being slowly paid and by its weight settling into gross coils and beautifully plotted with tortoise-shell squares of shading - indeed much as a snake is plotted, and this one rose steep up like an immeasurable cliff.

"In returning the sky in the west was in a great wide-winged or shelved rack of rice-white fine pelleted fretting. At sunset it gathered downwards and as the light then bathed it from below the fine ribbings and long windled jetties dripping with fiery bronze had the look of being smeared by some blade which had a little flattened and richly mulled what it was drawn across.

33

keenly accurate and capable of absorbing the minutest details are coupled in the poet with a force of intuition which flashes like lightning. Glenda he never tired of observing, and it is characteristic of him to have been able to report in intricate detail upon phenomena whose very essence seems to be insatiability. We feel that we have looked into the sky and seen only blankness when we read a record of observation as close-packed as this:

"At eight o'clock about sunset hanging due opposite the house in the east the greatest mass of clouds, to call it one cloud, I ever saw. It was a solid mass, tinged by the eye and taken up by itself it was shining white but taken with the sky, which was a strong hard blue, it was tinged with warm grayish blue; only near the earth it was tinged with purplish shadow. The mass of its side came from comparison not with what was visible but with the membranes of other clouds: like the Monto Ross range from the Gormer Great the purplish forced out everything else and loaded the eye-sight. It was in two lines fairly level above and below but not equal in breadth - as 2 to 3 or 3 to 4 perhaps - like two wagons or loaded trucks. The left was fairly made, a fleece of clouds in waving locks flowing open upwards, with sharp gutters between, like the ripples of a man's fleece blowing; the right was shapeless, topped like a heavy scale being slowly paid and by its weight settling into gross coils and beautifully dotted with tortoise-shell squares of shading - indeed much as a snake is dotted, and this one rose steep up like an inaccessible cliff.

"In returning the sky in the west was in a great wide-winged or shelled back of rice-white fine dotted fretting. At sunset it gathered downwards and as the light then faded it from below the fine ripples and long winded jetties dripping with fiery bronze had the look of being smothered by some blade which had a little lifted and richly milled what it was drawn across.

This bronze changed of course to crimson and the whole upper sky being now plotted with pale soaked blue rosettings seized some of it forward in wisps or plucks of smooth beautiful carnation or of coral or camellia rose-colour."¹

This is a remarkable description of observations made necessarily in a very limited space of time. But Hopkins was doing this sort of thing constantly. His personal records are testimony of a unique awareness of the physical world. He seems to have breathed in multiple-impressions and to have retained them with the utter completeness and freshness of their singular originality. Within the complex mind of the artist, these impressions retain the sharpness of their actuality, and from it they emerge in patterns of words instinct with urgent life.

The effectiveness of all poets rests in largest measure upon the power of words which they are able to generate. Words are the vehicles of communication, of emotional response, of recreated experience. As used by poets, they were originally the instruments of direct communication, but stone and skin and paper have interposed themselves between the artist and the listening ear. To become poetry, marks upon paper must undergo a complicated transition which produces only in exceptional cases the effect of direct response which was possible when the

¹ Lahey, G. F.: Gerard Manley Hopkins. London: Oxford University Press, 1930. Appendix III, pp. 164-165.

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reception was not delayed by the necessity of building up the effects of rhythm, intonation, and stress. In the reading of poetry, the initial burden is with the reader, not with the poet. Poetry in books elicits, in general, passive receptivity rather than active response, and poets as well as readers have become victims of the mischievous trick of the printing press. We have little poetry which offers resistance to the smooth, gliding process of reading; if any such resistance is to be found it is much more likely to derive from calculated, intentional effect than from any organic compulsion. The difficulty of reading Hopkins has already been referred to. It rests, in large measure, upon his restoring to poetry its original necessary immediacy of response. With him, the act and the word are instant - and we do not read that way; rather, we derive the act from the word by a cumbersome process of reconstruction. No more sober commentary can be made upon the lost art of an uttered poetry than the bewildering effect of Hopkins's verse upon a reading public which rather prides itself upon its ability to make something of T. S. Eliot and James Joyce. We have traded in the natural vigor of the sunlight for the smoky lamp of lucubration.

Hopkins himself was fully aware of the formidable gulf between poetry as he intended it to be and accustomed poetry. He was quite capable of being shocked

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Hopkins himself was fully aware of the formidable gulf between poetry as he intended it to be and accustomed poetry. He was quite capable of being shocked

by the vigor of his own originality, but he also knew what was the trouble with the customary response. Discussing his "oddity" with Bridges, he writes,

"..... when, on somebody returning me the Eurydice, I opened and read some lines, as one commonly reads whether prose or verse, with the eyes, so to say, only, it struck me aghast with a kind of raw nakedness and unmitigated violence I was unprepared for: but take breath and read it with the ears, as I always wish to be read, and my verse becomes all right." ¹

Bridges feels that "oddity" was not a part of the poet's intention, but since what he intended could not have been accomplished without the effect of "oddity", that seems a trivial critical tangent.

It is clear, in Hopkins's words, that the pattern of sound is integral to the experience of his poetry. He means far more, of course, than what we are accustomed to think of as effective sound imagery. Whatever the subject, the sound is important in Hopkins's verse. To glance at a few lines whose meaning has nothing whatever to do with sound will demonstrate this quite clearly. The mood of the second stanza of The Lantern out of Doors is simple, dignified, thoughtful:

"Men go by me whom either beauty bright
In mould or mind or what not else makes rare:
They rain against our much-thick and marsh air
Rich beams, till death or distance buys them quite,"

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of Poets is simple, dignified, thoughtful:

"Men go by us when other beauty bright
 In mind or mind or what not else makes rare:
 They rain against our much-thick and marsh air
 Rich poems, till death or distance buys them quite."

The mellow contemplative power of those lines is derived quite as much from their slow, alliterative chiming as from the regretful thought which they record, and the inescapable, clear stress upon "beauty bright", "rain", and "rich beams" infuses a luminousness which cannot exist in poetry that is read "with the eyes, so to say, only". It is the use of sound which gives the effect, so frequent in Hopkins, of being confronted by experience. One is not permitted, in such cases, to "approach" the thought. It thrusts itself upon the consciousness, as in "Enough! the Resurrection, A Heart's-clarion!"¹

or

"O then, weary then why should we tread? O why
 are we so haggard at the heart, so care-coiled,
 so fagged, so fashed, so cogged, so cumbered,
 When the thing we freely forfeit is kept with
 fonder a care,
 Fonder a care kept than we could have kept it,
 kept
 Far with fonder a care (and we, we would have
 lost it) ² finer, fonder
 A care kept."²

or

"You there are master, do your own desire;
 What hinders? Are you beamblind, yet to a fault
 In a neighbor deft-handed? are you that liar
 And, cast by conscience out, spendsavour salt?"³

In the second passage quoted above, from The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo, the sound is not only integral to the

1 That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection.

2 The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo.

3 The Candle Indoors.

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Reverend, a heart's-clasp!"

"O then, weary then why should we tread? O why
are we so haggard at the heart, so care-sodden,
so fagged, so fagged, so fagged, so numbered,
when the thing we freely forfeit is kept with
London a care,
London a care kept then we could have kept it,
Far with London a care (and we, we would have
lost it) Liner, London
a care kept."

"You there are master, to your own desire;
What hinderer? are you hampering, yet to a faint
In a neighbor self-handed? are you that line
And, cast by conscience out, spend your own self?"
In the second passage quoted above, from The Leaden Echo
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- 1 That Nature is a Mercifulman Fire and of the Comfort of
- 2 the Reverend Echo and the Golden Echo.
- 3 The Gentle Echo.

sense; its backward and forward movement bears an additional burden of stress which herds and drives the mind before it. Thus, frequently, sound clauses and sound sentences run "(not always respectfully) through, between, beyond, the accustomed pattern of verse and stanza, specifically and most elaborately scoring sense with sound."¹ It becomes increasingly apparent that this poetry of Hopkins demands the actual participation of the senses. Many poets allow us to think about or to imagine sensuous response, permitting, almost encouraging, the delusion that an imagined or contemplated reaction has imparted the full essence of experience.

The intricacies of response requisite to an understanding of the close-packed meanings of words always resilient beneath their heavy freight are heightened by the characteristic use of synaesthesia. To make imagery incandesce with the forging together of ordinarily distinct sensuous impressions is pure Hopkins. Miss Phare points out, in this connection, a resemblance to Rimbaud in his poem Vowels, which assigns an interpretation of color to each of the vowels.² In comparison, the use of synaesthesia by the two poets differs sharply. Rimbaud's

1 Trueblood, Charles K.: "The Esthetics of Gerard Hopkins", Poetry, August, 1937.

2 Phare, Elsie Elizabeth: op.cit., p. 21.

sense; its backward and forward movement bears an additional burden of stress which hurls and drives the mind before it. Thus, frequently, sound classes and sound sentences run " (not always respectfully) through, between, beyond, the accustomed pattern of verse and stanza, especially and most elaborately scoring sense with sound." It becomes increasingly apparent that this poetry of Hopkins demands the actual participation of the senses. Many poets allow us to think about or to imagine sensations response, permitting, almost encouraging, the delusion that an imagined or contemplated reaction has imparted the full essence of experience.

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1 Truogood, Charles K.: "The Esthetics of Gerard Hopkins", Poetry, August, 1937.
2 Phares, Elsie Elizabeth: op. cit., p. 21.

"A, velvet of glittering flies and shadows, you
Girdle cruel smells with suave parentheses;

E, candor of smoke; the tops of tents; the lance,
Of Nordic Kings; proud glaciers; shudders, yes;"¹

is a striking tour de force, whereas Hopkins's

"Her fond yellow hornlight wound to the west, her
wild hollow hoarlight hung to the height"

seems not to have been produced so much by the laboring intellect as to have been generated organically. The fusion of sound in "wound" and "hollow" with sight is a stressing of the fading of the early moonlight as it is succeeded by a more remote and harsher brightness.

Rimbaud's imagery does not achieve the effect of encompassment as does Hopkins's. (Although we are not equipped for a studious excursion into comparisons between Hopkins and Rimbaud, there are indications, in Rimbaud's explanation of his own method, of poetic sympathy between the two. He says, for example, of the poet's duty: "he must make his inventions felt, handled, heard", and "he should give more than the formula of his thought."² Hopkins has rarely fulfilled his duty in these respects. Another critic, M. D. Zabel, has called Hopkins the "peer of Rimbaud".³)

1 Abel, Lionel, translator: Some Poems of Rimbaud, New York, Exiles' Press, 1939.

2 Abel, Lionel: op.cit., Introduction, p. 5.

3 Zabel, M. D.: "Poetry as Experiment and Unity", Poetry, December, 1930.

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Girdle cruel walls with suave parenthesis;

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To organic sound pattern and the simultaneous complexity of synaesthesia there is added and over-spread an unconventionality in word usage and arrangement which contributes its quota to the difficulties of understanding. Accustomed to finding meaning in a certain order of structural relationships, the mind is at first shocked and offended to find that relationship exploded and rearranged in Hopkins's lines. In all such cases, we must "take breath and read it with the ears", whereupon it magically rights itself, and what would have been the conventional pattern is seen to be crude and lifeless by contrast. This is demonstrated in such passages as

"With not her either¹ beauty's equal or
Her injury's,"

"Those sweet hopes quell whose least me quickenings²
lift,"

"Our hearts's charity's hearth's fire, our thoughts'³
chivalry's throng's Lord"

"What life half lifts the latch of,
What hell stalks towards the snatch of,
Your offering, with despatch, of!"⁴

The clattering of lifeless or pallid-in-meaning words is nowhere permitted. Better arduous understanding than the sacrifice of the sense of instancy bound within words. The omission of the relative pronoun, which has distressed critics, from Bridges on, is responsible for snarls in in-

¹ Andromeda.

² The Bugler's First Communion.

³ The Wreck of the Deutschland.

⁴ Morning Middy and Evening Sacrifice.

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1. Antithesis.
2. The poet's first comparison.
3. The word of the poet's first.
4. The word of the poet's first.

terpretation which are most difficult to untangle. Hopkins was apparently able to traverse an entire landscape of meaning by leaping with delicate, precise poise from peak to peak. His readers find great difficulty in following, and must descend to the valleys sometimes to chart their course, supplying the uninteresting relative in lines like

"Squander the hell-rook ranks (that) sally to
molest him",¹

"Deals out that being (which) indoors each one
dwells;"²

"Save my hero, O Hero (that) savest."³

The assurance with which Bridges states in his discussion of the absent relatives, that "he (Hopkins) must, I suppose, have supplied them in his thought" indicates his failure to pierce the heart of Hopkins's use of language. It is extremely doubtful that the poet supplied the relatives "in his thought". It was the very essence of the peculiarity of his mental inscape to banish all interposition between impulse and act, between source and result. Bridges wishes to have grammatical logic preserved, not apprehending apparently, a stricter natural logic which will not permit a "which" to dwell "indoors each one", nor a vigorless "that" to "sally" in the station of "hell-rook ranks". Supply the relatives, certainly, when the mind

1 The Bugler's First Communion.

2 #34

3 The Loss of the Eurydice

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"Remember the half-rook ranks (that) ally to
moist him",
"Deal out that being (which) indows each one
dwells",
"Save my hero, O Hero (that) saves".

The assurance with which Bridges states in his discussion
of the absent relatives, that "he (Hopkins) must, I sup-
pose, have supplied them in his thought" indicates his
failure to grasp the heart of Hopkins's use of language.
It is extremely doubtful that the poet supplied the rela-
tives "in his thought". It was the very essence of the
peculiarity of his mental image to banish all interposi-
tion between impulse and act, between source and result.
Bridges wishes to have grammatical logic preserved, not
apprehending apparently, a subtler natural logic which
will not permit a "which" to dwell "indows each one", nor
a vigorous "that" to "ally" in the station of "half-rook
ranks". Supply the relatives, certainly, when the mind

- 1 The Butler's First Communion.
- 2 The
- 3 The Loss of the Empire

runs into a cul-de-sac without them, but never accept the misapprehension that it would be better poetry were they included.

Gerard Hopkins's sojourn in Wales seems to have given him such pleasure that it is agreeable to discover that he studied the Welsh language and adapted some of its literary practices to English verse. Terence Heywood's study¹ points out Hopkins's borrowing of cynghanedd or consonant chime, which he used more freely than its strict rules permit in Welsh, as in

"Warm-laid grave of a womb-life grey;"²

"lush-kept plush-capped sloe",³

"five-livéd and leavéd favour"⁴

The possibilities for increased subtlety and intricacy of stress afforded by consonant chime naturally had a strong appeal to Hopkins's artistry. It is also possible that he found, in his study of Welsh, encouragement or justification for his fondness for compound words, which are frequent in Welsh poetry. There is a great likelihood that he was tutored here in the use of the verb-object compound, so rare in English. He uses it with great power in "daregale", "rollrock", "blear-all", and "wringworld". This particular variety of compound must have originated

1 Heywood, Terence: "Hopkins' Ancestry", Poetry, July,

2 The Wreck of the Deutschland.

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3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

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1 Heywood, Terence: "Hopkins' Ancestry", Poetry, July,
2 The Work of the Poet, 1939.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.

in the same kind of urgent force that supports Hopkins's tendency to make relationships as instantly unified as possible.

The devices of structure or language employed by Hopkins derive, in final analysis, from a rooted elemental strength. Tender though his verses are at times, there is nothing of softness in his poetry. (Perhaps this explains, in part, the failure of women critics to master all the essentials of Hopkins. There seems to be no bridging of the ultimate gap between the essence of the masculine and the essence of the feminine.) His temper is untempered, primitive; his idiom embedded in the actual because it was his nature to insist upon actuality of experience. Sometimes this was deliberate, as when on his walks he tasted plants or took the plow from the plowman to try it for himself. But there are evidences of roots deeper growing than the liveliest curiosity, of an inexplicable welding, within the mysterious self, of consciousness and experience. Father Lahey points out a singular passage from one of the poet's diaries: "..... as I came in from a stroll with Mr. Purbrick he told me Hügel had said the scarlet and rose colour of flamingos was found to be due to a fine copper powder on the feathers. As he said this I tasted the brass in my mouth."¹ (He had previously tested "certain yellow spoons" to find out whether

1 Lahey, G. F.: op.cit., pp. 130-131.

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they were brass.) Such prompt response to suggestions could come only from an intelligence instantly and constantly quickened by the dynamic pulse of the senses.

One of the most unique records of sensitivity and its intellectual analysis is found in the poet's diary for 1869. This is experience almost too intricately deep for thought:

"One day in the long retreat they were reading in the refectory Sister Emmerich's account of the Agony in the Garden and I suddenly began to cry and sob and could not stop. I put it down for this reason, that if I had been asked a minute beforehand I should have said nothing of the sort was going to happen and even when it did I stood in a manner wondering at myself not seeing in my reason the traces of an adequate cause for such strong emotion - the traces of it I say because of course the cause in itself is adequate for the sorrow of a lifetime. I remember much the same thing on Maundy Thursday when the presanctified Host was carried to the sacristy. But neither the weight nor the stress of the sorrow, that is to say of the thing which should cause sorrow, by themselves move us or bring the tears as a sharp knife does not cut for being pressed as long as it is pressed without any shaking of the hand but there is always one touch, something striking sidewise and unlooked for, which in both cases undoes resistance and pierces, and this may be so delicate that the pathos seems to have gone directly to the body and cleared the understanding in its passage." ¹

The soul bared thus to the lance is awesome and terrifying to contemplate; the more impressive then is the resilience of will which rallies the intellectual powers to the searching out of cause, so that the individual has ab-

¹ House, Humphrey, editor: op.cit., p. 128.

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"One day in the long retreat they were
reading in the library Walter Emerson's
account of the agony in the garden and I and
daddy began to cry and sob and could not stop.
I put it down for this reason, that if I had
been asked a minute before and I should have
said nothing of the sort was going to happen
and even when it did I stood in a manner
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course the cause is itself is adequate for the
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The soul bared thus to the lance is evanescent and terrifying
to contemplate; the more impressive than is the resistance
of will which rallies the intellectual powers to the
assembling out of cause, so that the individual has no-

sorbed the experience with all of his faculties. It is futile to suggest that readers of Hopkins can, in actuality, cross the final line carved in the soul of another by experiences of such tremendous spiritual complexity. The "terrible" sonnets, in their intimate agony, are marked irrevocably by such a barrier.

In the realm of the wide-ranging senses, however, Hopkins gives back to us a world revitalized, fresh as Creation's dawn, wherein each created thing is stamped and sealed with the impress of its vital origin. It is in this freshness, this ability to convey impressions as though they were being felt for the first time, that Hopkins excels other poets who report on the experiences of the senses. The urgency of the living world is, at times, nearly too much to bear. Keats's nightingale is soothing and remote; Hopkins's seizes the attention almost too violently:

"For he began at once and shook
My head to hear. He might have strung
A row of ripples in the brook,
So forcibly he sung,
The mist upon the leaves have strewed,
And danced the balls of dew that stood
In acres all above the wood.

"I thought the air must cut and strain
The windpipe when he sucked his breath
And when he turned it back again
The music must be death.
With not a thing to make me fear,
A singing bird in morning clear
To me was terrible to hear."¹

¹ The Nightingale.

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"For he began to once and shook
 My head to hear. He might have strung
 A row of ribbons in the brook,
 So forcibly he sung,
 The mist upon the leaves have stirred,
 And danced the bells of dew that stood
 In acres all above the wood.

"I thought the air must cut and strain
 The windpipe when he sucked his breath
 And when he turned it back again
 The music must be death.
 With not a thing to make me fear,
 A singing bird in morning clear
 To me was terrible to hear."

The fact that the poet found God at the source of all forms in the natural world imparts no heavy solemnity to his lines. He is at home amid the dynamic alterations of nature in a way that is suggestive of Emily Dickenson's intimacy with the infinite, celebrating, in true holiday sense of the word, the world that revitalizes us through the contacts of the senses. His lines impel us toward such contact with an almost physical force:

"Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!
 O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!
 The bright boroughs, the circle-citadls there!
 Down in dim woods the diamond delves! the elves'-
 eyes!
 The grey lawns cold where gold, where quickgold
 lies!"¹

"Cloud-puffball, torn tufts, tossed pillows flaunt
 forth, then chevy on an air -
 built thoroughfare: heaven roysterers, in gay-gangs
 they throng;
 they glitter in marches."²

There is a primitive love for wildness, for natural things in motion that seems uncontrolled;

"This darksome burn, horseback brown,
 His rollrock highroad roaring down,
 In coop and in comb the fleece of his foam
 Flutes and low to the lake falls home.

.....

"What would the world be, once bereft
 Of wet and wildness? Let them be left,
 O let them be left, wildness and wet;
 Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet."³

1 The Starlight Night.

2 That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection.

3 Inversnaid.

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"Look at the stars! look, look up at the stars!
O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!
The bright borogoves, the air-castles tiered,
Down in dim woods the diamond daisies the silver-
eyes!
The grey lawns cold where gold, where quickgold
lies!"
"Gleam-puffball, torn tufts, tossed pillows flung
forth, then cheery on an air -
but thoroughfare: heaven roysters, in gay-gangs
they throng;
they glitter in marches."

There is a primitive love for wilderness, for
natural things in motion that seems uncontrolled;
"This darkness burn, horseback brown,
his rollock highroad roaring down,
in coop and in comb the fleece of his foam
flutes and low to the lake falls home."

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"What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and wilderness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wilderness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet."

- 1 The Starlight Night.
- 2 That Nature is a Horse-linen Five and of the Comfort of
the Resurrection.
- 3 Inversnaid.

To glory thus in the world, to be thrilled by creation is an experience which infuses life with vigor. If poetry is to be made therefrom, however, it must be the sensitivity of the artist which receives the impressions and the intellect and intuition of the artist which select and order the material which is to be the work of art.

Gerard Manley Hopkins was a musician, a composer, a graphic artist who drew with marvelously delicate perception and attention to detail, as the sketches reproduced in the Note-Books and Papers attest. His was the true artistic temper which reaches out continually for ways of expressing all that is coiled within the self, ready to spring to life when the touch of creative impulse comes. From reports of those who knew him, it is apparent that originality was the keynote of his mentality. Neither his opinion nor his poetry was derived. In idea and in form the originality of Hopkins achieves a place by itself in English poetry, isolated, not because it is unsympathetic, but because no other poet has been able to give us spiritual poetry so charged with life, or poetry of the natural world so stressed with spirit.

The most extravagant admirer of Hopkins would not venture to predict that this poet will ever become popular as have those who deal with the more pedestrian and commonplace interests of mankind. There exists, in the popular mind, a standoffishness toward spiritual

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matters unless they are kept nebulous behind a veil of sentimentality. Sentimentality is one of the intermediates which find no place in Hopkins's poetry. His candor never stoops to subterfuge. Even among very intelligent poets and scholars who have commented upon his work, there has been observed an unsympathetic barrier to understanding which grows out of failure to recognize the importance of the life of the spirit in its effect upon the product of the creative artist. But the ways of literary critics are mysterious. The deplorable weaknesses of a Byron, while they may not be excused, receive full measure of sympathetic understanding and accounting for. The spiritual strength of a Hopkins, on the other hand, is treated almost as though it were a weakness, the overcoming of which would have been beneficial to his poetry. The first and greatest obstacle, then, to popular acceptance of Hopkins is his subject matter. Since poets must reach, and touch, an audience, that must be considered as a limitation. This poet has himself given serious consideration to popular recognition as one of the touchstones by which the artist's worth is to be judged. Writing with great earnestness to Bridges in 1886, he said,

"..... I would have you and Canon Dixon and all true poets remember that fame, the being known, though of itself one of the most dangerous things to man, is nevertheless the true and appointed air, element, and setting of genius and its works. What are works of art

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"..... I would have you and Canon Dixon and all true poets remember that fame, the being known, though of itself one of the most dangerous things to man, is nevertheless the true and appointed aim, element, and setting of genius and its works. What are works of art

for? to educate, to be standards. Education is meant for the many, standards are for public use. To produce them is of little use unless what we produce is known, if known widely known, the wider the better, for it is by being known it works, it influences, it does its duty, it does good."¹

It is difficult to explain the inconsistency between theory and practice. Hopkins could not have been deceived into the belief that his own poetry would be "widely known", since he had to supply both Canon Dixon and Bridges with frequent explanations of his meanings.

Strict compression and astonishing peculiarities of word arrangement contribute to the development, in the mind of the reader, of a force of inertia that is likely to bring mental effort to a dead stop. Only the mind that has in it a streak of Hopkinsian ruggedness will persist in toiling over the rocky trail, picking an uncertain way around the omission of the relative pronoun, and looking about doubtfully for the blazings of words that are not where meaning and sequence demand that they should be. First readings of Hopkins require a dogged persistence (mitigated, of course, by the inexplicably stirring effect upon the emotion) that very few are willing to bring to the reading of poetry. Those who do persist over this uneven and wearing terrain emerge, finally

¹ Abbott, Claude Colleer, editor: The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges. London: Oxford University Press, 1935. p. 231.

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and victoriously, upon a realm of poetry whose fresh radiance, dynamic vigor, and natural harmony repay a hundredfold the hard intellectual labor of arriving. This "peculiar intellectual thrill which celebrates the step-by-step conquest of understanding"¹ can never be general property, and unless some kind of dynamic revolution in reading habits takes place, the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins will remain shut from general appreciation by the "paling" of its ineluctability. Manner must take its place beside matter as a definite limitation to general appreciation.

How important, how valuable can a poet be who is little read and less understood? Possessing the artistic integrity of a Hopkins, he can be extremely important to poetry, for the idea of poetry continues to exist only so long as its roots are supplied with food that is fresh with life. Poetry is a creative art because the visions of the poets continue to include new possibilities for the casting of experience into the forms of beauty. One needs only to read Hopkins aloud to appreciate that he has done something of great importance for the sound of poetry. To read his lines is a personal, rather than a rhetorical experience. The difference between poetry of the book and poetry of the voice has already been discussed. If it is important to preserve con-

1 Richards, I. A.: op.cit. p. 310.

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sciousness of the latter, Hopkins has done a great service to English verse, even though few or none are able to follow him in producing such insistently vocal verse. As Hopkins's literary executor, Robert Bridges was wise in withholding his friend's verse from publication until the twentieth century had developed a poetic temper and climate receptive to the earnest and unsparingly honest revelation of personal experience. Is it not, after all, the poet himself whom we seek always to know at the heart of his work? And man, in the procession of ages, carries forward with him the utterances of poets who have been stirred by the eternal experiences and riddles of his meaning in this planetary impermanence and by the insistent gropings and radiant affirmations of his spirit. There can be little question that Hopkins is one of the poets whose personal sensitiveness to and candid revelation of experience have made them of great human importance. "Searching nature," he says, in his commentary on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola, "I taste self but at one tankard, that of my own being."¹ In concentrated draughts, the unique experiences of self are preserved, retaining miraculously all their original freshness. There has been much admiration of Hopkins among modern poets; whether others can write the same kind of

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poetry is doubtful, for to do so would require a peculiar personal equipment that is rare in any age. The qualities in Hopkins to which all poets might well aspire are pointed out by Professor Abbott in his introduction to the Bridges correspondence: "..... by transcending in great measure the dead conventions of his contemporaries he is free of all ages and entombed by none. The main reasons for this distinction are his searching honesty and the peculiarly personal statement that is the core of his best work. A desire to emulate these qualities would be more salutary to those who aspire to follow him than tinkering with technique."¹ To those who value and are sensitive to "living" poetry, the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins are indeed blessings, but blessings not unmixed, for their essential appreciation is a boon achieved only by stern intellectual effort and a disciplining of the spirit until it attains a clarity sufficient to admit it into participation in one of the most earnest searchings for God which literature records.

¹ Abbott, Claude Colleer, editor: op.cit., Introduction, p. XXI.

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is an earlier version of *For a Picture of St. Dorothy*,

which was one of the poems given in the first

edition. The statement that Hopkins wrote no verses be-

The Poems:

twice 1868 and 1875 is not quite accurate, of course, for

he says in a letter to Canon Dixon, "..... for seven

years I wrote nothing but two or three little presentation

pieces which When he prepared the first edition of the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins for publication in 1918, Robert Bridges selected the best representative poems of his friend to present to a public which was bound to find this an unusual and difficult volume. Twelve years later, with the position of Hopkins as a poet secure in the best critical opinion, Charles Williams prepared the second edition in which he included all of the poems recognized authentically to have been written by Hopkins. While these additions have nothing to contribute to increasing the stature of the poet, they are of interest to students of Hopkins who wish to observe, in complete detail, the growth of his poetic power. In the first edition, Bridges included only three poems and one fragment that were written before 1868 when Hopkins entered his novitiate and yielded to the scruples which cut him off, for a time, from poetry. The appendix to the second edition contains sixteen additional poems, one of which

to come in Hopkins's use of language.

1 Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins: Notes, p. 100.

Chapter III

The Poets:

Single Poets and Fragments, Manuscripts

When he prepared the first edition of the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins for publication in 1918, Robert Bridges selected the best representative poems of his friend to present to a public which was bound to find this an unusual and difficult volume. Twelve years later, with the position of Hopkins as a poet secure in the best critical opinion, Charles Williams prepared the second edition in which he included all of the poems recognized authentically to have been written by Hopkins. While these additions have nothing to contribute to increasing the stature of the poet, they are of interest to students of Hopkins who wish to observe, in complete detail, the growth of his poetic power. In the first edition, Bridges included only three poems and one fragment that were written before 1888 when Hopkins entered his novitiate and yielded to the scruples which cut him off, for a time, from poetry. The appendix to the second edition contains sixteen additional poems, one of which

is an earlier version of For a Picture of St. Dorothea, which was one of the three early poems given in the first edition. The statement that Hopkins wrote no verse between 1868 and 1875 is not quite accurate, of course, for he says in a letter to Canon Dixon, "..... for seven years I wrote nothing but two or three little presentation pieces which occasion called for."¹ This accounts for Rosa Mystica and Ad Mariam, although Bridges is dubious about Hopkins's authorship of the latter; but Winter with the Gulf Stream, for which the date 1871 is given in the notes to the appendix of the second edition, does not quite seem to fit into the category of "presentation pieces". It is true that the poem was originally written while Hopkins was at Oxford, but it apparently escaped the destruction which was the fate of other works in verse, and the fact that 1871 is the date of the final version indicates that it was worked on during the supposedly "blank" period. Since this is one of the few early poems which contain any real resemblance to the poet's later powerful synthesis of observation and active language, one is curious to know how it came to be an exception during the period of exile from serious poetic experiment. Such phrases as "kneading the mounded mire", "bugle moon", and "brindled wharves", certainly are suggestive of what was to come in Hopkins's use of language.

1 Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins: Notes, p. 102.

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A detailed commentary upon the early simple lyrics and fragments of Hopkins's work would be unprofitable, since they are, in general, neither pretentious nor complicated. What he wrote at Oxford during the time when he was solving his personal religious problem reveals the direction which his mind was taking. Heaven-Heaven, subtitled "A nun takes the veil", shows the desire for tranquility in the ultimate solution of his problem as well as the attractiveness of the cloistered life, "Where springs not fail," and "Where no storms come". The two versions of the St. Dorothea poem indicate intelligent poetic craftsmanship in the reduction of the poem from seven stanzas to four, by means of which compression it gains in clarity and simplicity of expression. There is here also a faint suggestion of the poet's later characteristic swiftness of transition in the lines

"Lo, linked heavens with milky ways!
That was her larkspur row. - So soon?"

In The Habit of Perfection, the poet happily embraces the discipline of the religious life, yet his language is not entirely in keeping with subject and purpose. Professor Abbott observes, "The Habit of Perfection, ostensibly a rebuke to the power of the senses whose speech he would turn to divine uses, lingers fondly on such phrases as 'palate; the hutch of tasty lust' and 'feel-of-primrose

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"So, linked heavens with Milky Way!
That was her linkup now - so soon?"

In The Habit of Perfection, the poet happily embraces the discipline of the religious life, yet his language is not entirely in keeping with subject and purpose. Professor Abbott observes, "The Habit of Perfection, ostensibly a tribute to the power of the senses whose speech he would turn to divine uses, lingers too long on such phrases as 'palate; the hush of baby's foot' and 'feet-of-princess

hands' that lean rather to the sensuous than the stern."¹
 The attractiveness of imperfection is not entirely overcome by the sincerity with which the way of perfection is embraced. To include For a Picture of St. Dorothea, Heaven-Haven, and The Habit of Perfection in the first edition as examples of early work could certainly do the poet no harm. They are the competent work of a young writer with a lyric gift, and possess a youthfulness and a quality of light which make them attractive to the reader.

Spring and Death, the first poem in the appendix to the second edition, is undated, but its immaturity and conventional phrasing mark it as a very early effort. It employs the device of the dream, in which the poet comes upon Death in the springtime marking the flowers which he will claim in autumn. The use of the dream destroys immediately any sense of actuality of experience, and expressions such as "stilly wood" and "sable track" detract by their flatness and lack of originality. The poem contains no hint of the uniqueness which is associated with Hopkins's later development. Barnfloor and Winepress (1865) and Nondum (1866) are derived from Biblical quotations which appear as subtitles. The first, rejoicing in the Redemption, represents Christ through the figures of harvesting and threshing, and the treading of

¹ Abbott, Claude Collier: The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges, pp. XXV-XXVI.

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the sacred Vintage from the fruit of the tortured Vine. In the line, "Five ways the precious branches torn", appears the first reference in Hopkins's poetry to the Five Wounds of Christ whose symbolism impressed him so deeply and which he used, with great power, in "The Wreck of the Deutschland". Nondum expresses acquiescence in the mysterious ways of the hidden God and the hope for revelation in eternity. It is quiet, personal, unmarked by any striking originality, and suggests the humility and unquestioning obedience of Whittier's The Eternal Goodness. These two poems and the jubilant Easter are more important, of course, as records of the shaping of the way of life which Hopkins was to follow than as works of poetic inspiration. Their whole-hearted joy in the gifts of God, and their enthusiastic, youthful reverence lend them a spirit and life which are pleasant to find in religious poetry.

The Nightingale (1866), in its indirect presentation of the essential subject of the poem, contrasts sharply with the directness of approach which characterizes Hopkins's poetry after its principles had been established. The song of the nightingale and its effect are sharp and touching, but they are presented as the premonitory musings of a wife upon the morning of her husband's shipwreck. The strange affinity which Hopkins felt for shipwrecks finds its earliest expression in this

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poem. Reference has been made earlier to Winter with the Gulf Stream.¹ It is a curious and rather remarkable poem, achieving quite successfully the sense of unreality about a winter season which is not normal. The "bugle moon" of this poem, shaped like the crescent hunting horn, may very well be the origin of the poetic image which grew in the space of ten years to the "fond yellow hornlight" of Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves.

Of the "presentation pieces", Ad Mariam and Rosa Mystica, little need be said. Like most "occasional" poetry they are not integral to their author's serious poetry. Light and lilting in measure, and sentimental in expression, they no doubt served their purpose, which had nothing to do with writing poetry. The simple six lines On St. Winefred are much closer to poetic genuineness. The three final poems of the appendix, all undated, are interesting chiefly because they display the classical scholar and the priest at work together, using the gift of language to the glory of God. In S. Thomae Aquinatis there is a suggestion of the metaphysical "conceit" in the comparison, in stanza six, of the blood of Christ to the blood of the pelican with which its young are fed. Reverent though they are, these poems lack the life and spirit of the probably earlier Barnfloor and Winepress and Easter.

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The remainder of the simple lyrics and fragments to be considered were included in the first edition, and were, therefore, considered by Bridges to be adequately representative of Hopkins's work. Some of the fragments, #53, for example, which begins "What being in rank-old nature should earlier have that breath been", are naturally disappointingly inconclusive, making the reader wish that time, duty, or inclination had enabled the poet to carry on from fair beginnings. Of the lyrics, some are delightful, some hold promise of delight, and some, cast in severer mold, reflect the troubled mind and spirit of Hopkins's latter days.

Penmaen Pool, written in 1876 "For the Visitors' Book at the Inn", displays the constant delight which the poet found in his Welsh surroundings. The poem is fresh and lively, tripping like "the Mawddach", and makes the reader wish to find for himself the pleasures of Penmaen Pool, to see the heavens "show brighter shaken" therein, to watch "the raindrop-roundels looped together that lace the face of Penmaen Pool", and to taste the "ale like goldy foam that frocks an oar in Penmaen Pool". The Silver Jubilee, dedicated to James First Bishop of Shrewsbury on the 25th Year of his Episcopate July 28, 1876, is a fine, simple tribute to faithful leadership in the service of God. Summa, of which only four lines are printed, was believed by Bridges to be the beginning of an ambi-

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Pennan Pool, written in 1878 "For the Visitors' Book at the Inn", displays the constant delight which the poet found in his Welsh surroundings. The poem is fresh and lively, tripping like "the Mawddach", and makes the reader wish to find for himself the pleasure of Pennan Pool, to see the heavens "show brighter amaranthine", to watch "the windrop-roundels looped together that face the face of Pennan Pool", and to taste the "like like gold" from that brook as out in Pennan Pool". The Silver Jubilee, dedicated to James Fitz Bishop of Cheshambury on the 25th Year of his Episcopate July 22, 1878, is a fine, simple tribute to faithful leadership in the service of God. Sumus, of which only four lines are printed, was believed by Bridges to be the beginning of an embodi-

tious poem, the attempts at which were destroyed when Hopkins joined the Jesuits. The question which begins the fragment #53 is characteristically Hopkins in its searching out of a source, in this case, from the reference to billow and trumpet, probably the original source of the power of the "heart-song powerful peals" of organ music.

The mystery of the unaccountable and unpredictable self within which alone rests the determination of life for good or ill was a subject which frequently attracted the interest and meditation of Hopkins. On the Portrait of Two Beautiful Young People, written in 1886, shows a sombre awareness of the hazards that may overturn bright human promise with misfortune unless the truth of Christ is within the life to hold it steadfast from man's corruption. The same idea is found in The Bugler's First Communion. It belongs to that stern side of Hopkins's nature to which was revealed with awful clarity the fact that a life which would find its way to God could make no human compromises.

The four-line fragment, #55, suggests in its first line that perhaps the poet had been attracted again to the subject of shipwreck, unless the "doom" of "the sea" was to have a more symbolical meaning. Ash-boughs, so named by Bridges, is an interesting poem for several reasons. It shows, in the first place, the craftsman at work, since the "b." portion presents later

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variants from the original "a." form. There are some definite improvements in "b.", particularly in repeating "eye" in line 8 to intensify the idea of physically seeing which "eyes" give in line 1. Bridges's note on the poem points out that he received it on the same sheet with four others, #44 - #47. Since each of these is one of the gloomy sonnets that reflect bitterness and internal stress, it is heartening to discover that these days were not all dark, that the poet's eye could find delight in the windy pattern of ash-boughs against the sky. The language of the poem is most characteristic in its emphasis upon living reality, as in the sense of actual nourishment in "Is anything a milk to the mind so", or in the childlike behavior of the boughs, lashed tender by the wind, as they "nestle" against "heaven most high".

Incomplete though it is, #57 has a quiet steadiness and charm both in thought and expression. Hope, holding out the mirror of the mind to catch Christ's likeness, is disappointed, not because Christ is not there, but because she is able to see only herself. Such a differentiation between the significance of the means and the end would be clearly comprehended by the poet who could look through all things human and divine and discover for himself their pure essence. Hope for Christ in life is not, and cannot achieve in itself, the reality of Christ in life.

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For years Hopkins hoped to write a poetic drama based upon the story of St. Winefred, her murder and her rising from the dead. The best fruits of his efforts in this direction are in the chorus for the maidens, The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo, which is complete in itself and has no integral relationship with the proposed drama. The fragments of Acts I and II suggest that the poet would not have been highly successful as a dramatist. Some lines are pedestrian, while others are too obscure for the purposes of drama. The long soliloquy of the murderer Caradoc has some moments of power, and its opening is arresting and dramatic: "My heart, where have we been? What have we seen, my mind?" In his unrepentent reliance upon "the heart valiant" and "will unwavering", Caradoc resembles somewhat the Satan of Paradise Lost. There is also a suggestion of Macbeth in Caradoc's reaction to the murder:

"..... my other self, this soul,
Life's quick, this kind, this keen self-feeling,
With dreadful distillation of thoughts sour as blood,
Must all day long taste murder."

In general, however, it would seem that Hopkins was temperamentally unsuited to the production of such a long, sustained piece of work as this drama would have been. His longest poem, The Wreck of the Deutschland, depended upon the immediate impetus of present tragedy, and the story of St. Winefred, moving though it may be, did not possess for him that sense of immediacy.

For years Hopkins hoped to write a poetic drama based upon the story of St. Winifred, her murder and her rising from the dead. The best fruits of his efforts in this direction are in the chorus for the wedding, The Deaden Echo and the Golden Echo, which is complete in itself and has no integral relationship with the proposed drama. The fragments of Acts I and II suggest that the poet would not have been highly successful as a dramatist. Some lines are pedestrian, while others are too obscure for the purposes of drama. The long soliloquy of the murderer Caradoc has some moments of power, and its opening is arresting and dramatic: "My heart, where have we been? What have we seen, my mind?" In this magnificent reliance upon "the heart valiant" and "will unwavering", Caradoc resembles somewhat the Satan of Paradise Lost. There is also a suggestion of Macbeth in Caradoc's reaction to the murder:

"..... My other self, this soul,
Life's quick, this kind, this keen self-feeling,
With gradual distillation of thoughts soon as blood,
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In general, however, it would seem that Hopkins was permanently unsettled to the production of such a long, sustained piece of work as this drama would have been. His longest poem, The Wreck of the Deutschland, depended upon the immediate impact of present tragedy, and the story of St. Winifred, moving though it may be, did not possess for him that sense of immediacy.

The patriotic song for England, #59, need not detain the attention long. The poet wrote the melody for it as well as the words. While one finds no fault in the sentiment of patriotism, the jingling rhythm of the piece seems most un-Hopkinsian, and there is no redeeming originality of expression. Perhaps this is an illustration of mistaken inspiration, which seems to have led most poets astray occasionally.

The note of gloom sounds once again in "The times are nightfall, look, their light grows less", the opening line of #60. Hopeless discouragement with the state of the world is mitigated only by the fact that order is possible through the will in the "small commonwealth" within the self. The "Cheery Beggar" of #61, on the other hand, makes the world seem fine and bright. The lime-tree fragrance and the sunny hopefulness of the beggar are delightful summertime boons. #62 begins a contrast of the values of the nimble wit of "Denis" and the steady purpose of "Arthur", while #63 shows the poet as an objective portrait painter. The painting is most attractive - the head of a young man, with a complexion fresh-colored and tanned, wearing a flower "For a beauty-bow" to his straw hat through whose brim the sunlight dances on his forehead. Such a gay picture Frans Hals might have painted. #64, #65 and #66 all reflect the quick awareness and eager response to the beauties of nature that are so

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much a part of Hopkins. The song of the woodlark and of the cuckoo, the unexpected glimpse of a fringe of moon just above a mountain in the early morning are lyrically recorded. Probably the comparison of the thin edge of moon, in #65, to "the fringe of a finger-nail held to a candle" is not exactly poetically appropriate, though it gives unmistakably the impression of shape, texture, and color which the moon possesses under the circumstances recorded in the poem.

On a piece of music, #67, is more sustained and serious than most of the work included under Unfinished Poems and Fragments. It expresses the poet's fondness for things that cannot be catalogued, that justify themselves solely by existence as they are. Pied Beauty is the most completely artistic expression of this idea, of course. The piece of music is good, part of the good that "grows wild and wide", in contrast to right which "must seek a side". Its law and boundary exist only in the intrinsic self of the musician from whose being it sprang. There is a moving contrast between this poem's statement

"Therefore this masterhood,
This piece of perfect song,
This fault-not-found-with good,
Is neither right nor wrong."

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much a part of Hopkins. The song of the woodcock and of the cuckoo, the unexpected glimpses of a fringe of moon just above a mountain in the early morning are typically recorded. Probably the comparison of the thin edge of moon, in 1925, to "the fringe of a finger-nail held to a candle" is not exactly poetically appropriate, though it gives unmistakably the impression of shape, texture, and color which the moon possesses under the circumstances recorded in the poem.

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and the conclusion of the tortured mind in Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves, which sees all life ultimately and ir-

revocably parted in

"two folds - black, white; right, wrong;"

and warns

"ware of a world where but these two tell, each off
the other;"

Blessed are they that are certain.

The comic triolet, #68, is sufficient evidence that Gerard Manley Hopkins was never intended to be a humorist. What a ghastly joke that this and what Bridges calls "another very poor comic triolet" should have achieved newspaper publication while the genuine artistic work of the poet remained neglected!

Of the sonnet #69, Bridges remarks in his note, "It might be argued that this sonnet has the same right to be recognized as a finished poem with the sonnets 44-47, but those had several years' recognition whereas this must have been thrown off one day in a cynical mood, which he could not have wished permanently to intrude among his last serious poems". In this case, Bridges's judgment was most trustworthy. Hopkins has written some oppressive poems, but this sonnet, in the opinion of the present writer, can only be described as unpleasant. It seems almost incredible that the same poet who could find the poor, average human to be "immortal diamond" could, in a few months' time, see man only as creation's most insignificant triviality, incapable of the

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slightest magnificance in his failures. The real spirit of the man must have been completely submerged by woes personal or of the world.

No date is given for #70, To his Watch, but its straightforward simplicity suggests the later discipline achieved by the poet. It is a good piece of verse, ingenious rather than inspired, its most impressive idea being that man, too, is a teller of present time, the eternity of "comfort" or of "woe" being derived from the performance of the brief-timed human task. The four lines of #71 are full of life and vigor in their depicting of the windy ruin of hoped-for summer and harvest. It is one of the many fragments whose incompleteness is to be regretted.

In Epithalamion, #72, written in 1888, on the occasion of his brother's marriage, wedlock is represented in what is probably the most unusual figure ever conceived by poet. Reading the delightful description of swimming in fresh and lovely country water, one wonders, between lines, what this has to do with the holy state of matrimony. The revelation is as swift and surprising as the sudden plunge into the pool:

"What is the delightful dene?
Wedlock. What is water? Spousal love."

The intended ode breaks off after the poet has begun to address his family and friends, and while the work is not

slightest magnificence in his failures. The real spirit
 of the man must have been completely submerged by those
 personal or of the world.
 No date is given for "To His Water," but
 its straightforward simplicity suggests the later dis-
 tance achieved by the poet. It is a good piece of
 verse, ingenious rather than inspired, its most impressive
 idea being that man, too, is a being of present time, the
 entirety of "cosmos" or of "world" being derived from the
 performance of the brief-lived human task. The four lines
 of "To His Water" are full of life and vigor in their depicting of
 the windy ruin of hopes-for summer and harvest. It is one
 of the many fragments whose incompleteness is to be re-
 gretted.

In Balladistics, 172, written in 1888, on
 the occasion of his brother's marriage, Whitman is repre-
 sented in what is probably the most unusual figure ever
 conceived by poet. Reading the delightful description of
 swimming in fresh and lovely country water, one wonders
 between lines, what this has to do with the holy state of
 matrimony. The revelation is as swift and surprising as
 the sudden plunge into the pool:

"What is . . . the delightful name?
 Wedding. What is water? Spousal love."

The intended one breaks off after the poet has begun to
 address his family and friends, and while the work is not

quite successful as a celebration of marriage, it contains many beautiful lines and is extremely successful in capturing the eager physical joy of "bellbright bodies" at sport in the "waterworld".

It is interesting to observe in #73, a simple hymn beginning, "Thee God, I come from, to Thee go", the recurrent Hopkins idea of the source of all things in God and the force of God in all things:

"What I know of thee I bless
As acknowledging thy stress
On my being"

The final fragment, #74, is also in the religious vein, a promise to administer to the final repentance of friends who have loved him and done good for his sake.

In the group of poems which have been broadly classified as narrative for the purpose of this study, there is opportunity to observe both the origin and the full flower of many of Hopkins's particular and original qualities. The Escorial, a school prize poem, written at age of fifteen, presents the history of that monumental structure erected by Philip II of Spain to honor St. Lawrence who had blessed him with victory over the French in the battle of St. Quentin. Father Lahey remarks of the poem, "The knowledge of art and architecture displayed therein shows us to what extent his early training had progressed."¹ Discarding the Spanish Gothic, the Classic,

1 Lahey, G. F.: Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 9

quite successful as a celebration of marriage, it contains many beautiful lines and is extremely successful in capturing the eager physical joy of "delightful bodies" at sport in the "waterworld".

It is interesting to observe in WVS, a simple hymn beginning, "Thee God, I come from, to Thee go", the recurrent Hopkins idea of the source of all things in God and the force of God in all things:

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¹ Lamy, G. P.: Gerald Manley Hopkins, p. 8

and the Moorish styles, Philip indulged the peculiar architectural fancy of having this memorial to St. Lawrence erected in the form of a gridiron to symbolize the instrument of the saint's martyrdom. The poet's note explains: "The architect was Velasquez; the style Italian classic, partly Ionic, partly Doric. The whole is sombre in appearance, but grand, and imposing." The accuracy of detail and the rightness of observation revealed in the architectural descriptions as well as in those of the masterpieces of art which decorated the splendid interior show that the artist was well-developed in the fifteen year old boy. The chief purpose of the Escorial was to serve as a monastic house; the poet's description of the cloistered life indicates no slightest inkling of what such a life was one day to signify for him. The words are the conventional reaction of an outsider to whom the religious life makes no personal appeal:

"A cloistered convent first, the proudest home
Of those who strove God's gospel to confound
With barren rigour and a frigid gloom - "

The splendors of the Escorial came to an end at the destructive hands of the French in the Peninsular War; the monks fled, and the few remaining art treasures were removed to Madrid. Since then, in the bleak majesty of its desolation, the Escorial has remained, repelling the attacks of wild mountain storms, a brooding, empty monument to the transiency of the acts of kings. The stanzas of

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"A cloistered convent life, the poorest home
Of those who strive God's house to contain
With barren rigor and a rigid gloom -"

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the poem are Spenserian, and the whole flavor of it that of youthful romanticism which almost inevitably finds itself preoccupied, at one time or another, with the contemplation of imposing ruins. The only unmistakable quality of originality which it possesses is in the close observation and sharp presentation of detail by means of which the former glories of the Escorial emerge for a moment, clear of time's obscuring clouds.

More impressive as the work of a lad in his teens is another school prize poem, A Vision of the Mermaids, written two years after The Escorial. The power of the senses is strong throughout the poem. Father Lahey calls attention to "its rich luxuriousness, unrestraint, and wholly delightful fancy" which "make it an extraordinary achievement."¹ It is an excursion into the purest realm of fancy where color glows and dances with an iridescent radiance never to be matched on earth, and all sound is haunting, ineffable sweetness. In imagination, the poet rows out from shore at sunset and encounters his vision of water maidens in a rose-tinted region of sea and sky. Whether it was by accident or design that he separated himself from earth for his fanciful adventure, the effect of being completely free of its boundaries is entirely in harmony with the spirit of the poem. The

¹ Lahey, G. F.: op.cit, p. 11.

the poem are Spenserian, and the whole flavor of it that of youthful romanticism which almost inevitably finds its self preoccupied, at one time or another, with the contemplation of imitating things. The only remarkable quality of originality which it possesses is in the close observation and sharp presentation of detail by means of which the former glories of the Romantic emerge for a moment, clear of time's obscuring clouds.

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richly-hued description of sunset

"Plum-purple was the west; but spikes of light
Speared open lustrous gashes, crimson-white;

indicates that even as early as this, Hopkins had begun to make strikingly detailed observations of the continuous activities within the sky. At the height of sunset beauty when everything is "show'er'd" "with garnet wreaths and blooms of rosy-budded fire", appear the mermaids, "ris'n from the deeps". The poet sees them clothed in garments of filmy water-brightness, diademed with jewels and blossoms of the deep; in crowding, rosy clouds, they approach his rock, some playing in the water,

"But most in a half-circle watch'd the sun;
And a sweet sadness dwelt on everyone;"

Their plaintive, haunting song trembles upon the air, echoing a wordless, inexplicable sorrow, which the poet finds deeply moving. The rim of ocean hides the sun, "a stealthy wind" creeps round, and the spell is broken, the maidens gone, the poet alone, making his way back to shore.

A Vision of the Mermaids is much more than an example of extravagant imagination and youthful exuberance. The sensitiveness to color and pattern which it displays is the foreshadowing of remarkable poetic achievement in the retaining of felt experience in the poet's later work. Professor Abbott has pointed out the important indications to be found in the poem: "This is far more than a boyish exercise in heroic couplets after the manner of Keats.

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Despite an unpruned luxuriance of taste for richness and colour resulting in a surfeit of epithets, there is a native craftsmanship in the writing and a welling up of youthful lyricism strong in promise. It is the work of a youth delighted with the evidence of his awakened senses, fed chiefly through the eye, but rejoicing also in a poetic energy alive to other gradations than those of colour This quality of sensuous apprehension, later to be disciplined and enlarged by concentration, and uniting with poetic vision certain attributes of painter and musician, is to be one of the main characteristics of Hopkins's poetry. Few poets have felt more deeply the beauty of earth."¹ A Vision of the Mermaids, then, is an important signpost for the student to observe at the beginning of the road which he travels toward understanding and appreciation of Hopkins's poetry.

The undated poem on the martyrdom of Margaret Clitheroe, who was pressed to death at York in 1586, is printed among the additional poems in the appendix to the second edition. It appears to be an unfinished version of the grim story of a woman who persevered in her own religious devotion, not considering

"whether or no
She pleased the Queen and Council"

¹ Abbott, Claude Colleer, editor: op.cit., Introduction, p. XXV.

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version of the grim story of a woman who persevered in her own religious devotion, not considering

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The shocking brutality of the execution of a woman and the child within her strikes cruelly in the sharp, abrupt words of the poem. While the work is uneven in quality, there is the typical Hopkins power in some of the lines, such as

"They wound their winch of wicked smiles"

describing the deliberate cunning of those who plotted against innocence, or

"She was with the choke of woe"

which makes the death agony appallingly real.

To shear down the bulk of The Wreck of the Deutschland to appropriate proportions for his study is an impossible task. The facts surrounding its writing are well known. In it a new poet speaks, after seven years' silence, inspired, objectively at least, by the shipwreck, in the mouth of the Thames, in which five Franciscan nuns, exiled from Germany by the Falk Laws, lost their lives. That the mind of the poet had not been divorced from its own original business during the seven outwardly unproductive years is abundantly clear in the new and unusual metrical pattern used now for the first time. The narrative bears, besides the powerful recounting of the tragic majesty of the December storm, the burden of the heroic conduct of one of the nuns whose strength of devotion was great enough to lead her to the reality of Christ in the midst of the terrifying insistence of doom, finding

The shocking brutality of the execution of a woman and the
child which her mother carried in the womb, and the
words of the poem. "What is the work of the living in death?"
there is the typical human power in some of the lines,
such as

"They would have been of mixed blood"

describing the delicate turning of those who played

against innocence, or

"One man with the stroke of war"

which makes the death more appealingly real.

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in the world of the future, in which five generations have

existed from Germany to the East, lost their lives.

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heroic combat of one of the men whose spirit is de-

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in the midst of the terrifying finality of war, finding

for herself and her fated companions the final sacrificial glory of the Cross. It is clear, even at the first reading, that the poet is recording tremendously symbolized personal experience. The narrative of events is given entirely in the second part of the poem. The ten stanzas of the first part are the testimony of a soul which has found in the secret places of its own being the meaning of God. That meaning is manifold in all the beauty of the world, in the inmost stress felt by those seeking their way toward the desired spiritual consummation, in the terror of His disfavor. But in all these the meaning is incomplete. Union with God is not achieved merely through realization of His power; it comes fully only when the meaning of the Cross is forged with Man's life and spirit. The children of God cannot achieve spiritual maturity until their sinews can bear the grave weight of sacrifice with joy for His sake. This is the climax of the spiritual life, and its achievement is the basis of the much-discussed figure which the poet employs in stanza 8:

"How a lush-kept plush-capped sloe
Will, mouthed to flesh-burst,
Gush! - flush the man, the being with it, sour or
sweet,
Brim, in a flash, full! - Hither, then, last or first
To hero of Calvary, Christ,'s feet -
Never ask if meaning it, wanting it, warned of it -
men go!"

Not with the first-fruits but with the last is the harvest complete, when Thou, the Master,

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"How a lamb-kept plumb-capped also
 Will, mounted to flash-burst,
 Gush - flash the man, the being with it, soon or
 soon,
 Brim, in a flash, full - Hither, then, last or first
 To have of Calvary, Christ's last -
 Never ask its meaning it, wanting it, wanted of it -
 Man go!"

Not with the first-fruit but with the last is the harvest
 complete, when Thou, the Master,

"Hast thy dark descending and most art merciful then."
 How cruelly dark were those descendings to be and how ponderous their weight the poet was to feel in the bleakness of later years. It is of real significance that he understood even at this earlier time in his religious life the full complexity of the evolving cycle of the spirit. Here, then, is the strongest stress of meaning in the poem, carrying over to the example of the nun crying out for Christ in her extremity, not for relief, not for mercy, but knowing Him on the Cross at last. That meaning is clear in the lines from stanza 27:

"The jading and jar of the cart,
 Time's tasking, it is fathers that asking for ease
 Of the sodden-with-its-sorrowing heart,
 Not danger, electrical horror; then further it finds
 The appealing of the Passion is tenderer in prayer
 apart:"

This concentration upon the central idea of the poem has resulted in the passing over of its great power and beauty of language, but since the latter have been ably commented on by Father Lahey¹ and Father Kelly², as well as other critics, while the former has not received so much critical attention, this procedure may add, in some small measure, to a better understanding of the poem.

In the second poem of shipwreck, The Loss of the Eurydice, Hopkins lacked the strong religious impetus

¹ Lahey, G. F.: op.cit., pp. 108-112.

² Kelly, Bernard: The Mind and Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.

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which inspired The Wreck of the Deutschland, although the poem has a good deal of religious feeling in places. The metrical pattern of shorter lines cannot achieve the surging force of the former poem in which the stanzas build to long, rolling final lines. The event was a terrible tragedy. Returning from a training cruise of naval cadets, the ship foundered and all of the three hundred on board were lost. The storm imagery of the poem has the tempestuous power of unpredictable wind and cloud. Action is strong, as always in Hopkins's poetry, as in

"A beetling baldbright cloud thorough England
Riding: there did storms not mingle? and
Hailropes hustle and grind their
Heavengravel? wolfsnow, worlds of it, wind there?"

The fate of the men, straining their unequal strength to meet the onslaught of wild water, the bravery of the captain who follows "His charge through the champ-white water-in-a-wallow", the beauty of unrealized promise in the bodies of the drowned, are the active and tragic matter of the poem; but as in The Wreck of the Deutschland there is more than the story of shipwreck. An earnest concern for the spiritual fate of fellow Englishmen is apparent in the final stanzas, for the land which once nurtured the True Church, now fallen away, "hoar-hallowed shrines unvisited", for "this crew, in Unchrist, all rolled in ruin". The final thought is that although redemption is impossible, prayer, such as that of the poet,

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"shall fetch pity eternal". This seems to have been one of Hopkins's most troubled and uneasy poems. It will be recalled that he said of it that once when it was returned to him and he reread it, it struck him "aghast with a kind of raw nakedness and unmitigated violence". In several letters to Bridges, Hopkins answers questions and what must have been rather captious objections to certain portions of the poem. It seems a bit odd that one who had known Hopkins's poetry most intimately from its beginnings had not become more accustomed to reading its meanings for himself than Hopkins's explanations indicate. Stanza 26 requires a knowledge of religious associations which Bridges would not be likely to possess, and in that case, he was justified in making the inquiries to which Hopkins replied:

"The One of the Eurydice is Duns Scotus
The thought is: the island was so Marian that
the very Milky Way we made a roadmark to that
person's shrine and from one of our seats of
learning went forth the first great
champion of her Immaculate Conception,¹ now in
our days made an article of faith."

Apparently the grasp of Hopkins's poetic characteristics was not yet strong enough in his friend, for the poet must also explain the "hero" stanza (28):

"The words are put into the mouth of a mother,
wife, or sweetheart who has lost a son, husband,
or lover respectively by the disaster and who

¹ Abbott, Claude Colleer, editor: op.cit., p. 77

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This reply must certainly match the inquiry in meticulousness. There were queries about the appropriateness of words, also, and Hopkins's treatment of these shows quite clearly his care in word choice and his reasoning as to the fundamental fitness of his expressions. He writes, for example (and a number of other instances might be quoted):

"How are hearts of oak furred? Well, in sand and sea water. The image comes out true under the circumstances, otherwise it could not hold together. You are to suppose a stroke or blast in a forest of 'hearts of oak' (=, ad propositum, sound oaktimber) which at one blow both lays them low and buries them in broken earth. Furling (ferrule is a blunder for furl, I think) is proper when said of sticks and stones."²

Bridges's note on stanza 14 indicates another misunderstanding: "You mistake the sense of this as I feared it would be mistaken. I believed Hare to be a brave and conscientious man, what I say is that even those who seem unconscientious will act the right part at a great push."³ The poem was the object of much uneasy discussion of this nature. It did not wholly satisfy the poet - "about 'mortholes' I do wince a little" - and was subjected to a

1 Abbott, Claude Colleer, editor: op.cit., p. 78

2 Ibid, p. 52

3 Ibid, p. 53

'Hero' means 'Hero of a
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1 Abbott, *Complete Collected*, editor: op.cit., p. 78
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great deal of revision. In contrast to the rolling freedom of The Deutschland it seems a more labored, less inspired work.

Through the fragments, simple lyrics, and narrative poems of which brief glimpses only are possible in this study, may be observed the promise of much which was to be richly fulfilled, as well as the experimentation of the artist seeking the form which would, for him, be organic with the experience which is the raw material of art. The evidence of these poems leads to the conclusion that, for this poet, the most successful creative efforts are those in which he deals with his own direct, personal response to experience, unimpeded by the necessity for treatment of matter extraneous to the self. The latter he can do skillfully, but it is when the poet is alone with experience that he is most moving and achieves the greatest artistic harmony.

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art. The evidence of these poems leads to the conclusion
that, for this poet, the most successful creative efforts
are those in which he deals with his own direct, personal
response to experience, unimpeded by the necessity for
treatment of matter extraneous to the self. The latter
he can do skillfully, but it is when the poet is alone with
experience that he is most moving and achieves the greatest
artistic harmony.

Chapter IV

The Poems:

Poems of the Mature, Confident Artist - Poems of Darkness.

The development of an artist is a process of great and deep complexity. Contemplating a body of artistic work, one is aware of growth, change, and the increase or decrease of certain powers. The impact of life upon the personality of the artist and the capacity of that personality for interpretation of experience are the factors which determine the direction of such growth and change. Within the artist the individuality expands and stabilizes itself; a view of life becomes of immense personal significance, and experience assumes importance in proportion to its relation to this view of life. In his created work, the artist gives expression to what is most significant for him in the pattern which experience presents and individuality orders and interprets. It is upon the growth of the force within the artist that his achievement depends. The life of the vine that puts forth its shoots to climb higher and wider upon the wall, and to wind itself around corners onto new surfaces, is in the

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roots, buried in an invisible existence wherein is received the nourishment which sends the highest tendril upward. The invisible life of the artist is both conscious and unconscious. No one can, with assurance, estimate the effects of the subtle influences with which his environments, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual, surround him; yet it is characteristic of the true artist to be able to perceive more clearly and to order more harmoniously the great, stirring, miscellaneous mass of experience. As these processes of perception and order become more marked, the artist achieves the synthesis between the inner and the outer life that is necessary to mature, sustained artistic production. Such power develops slowly, in most cases, and the development must never cease if the artist is to maintain his creative force. In his chapter on the Act of Expression in Art as Experience, John Dewey writes:

"In one of his letters to his brother Van Gogh says that 'emotions are sometimes so strong that one works without knowing that one works, and the strokes come with a sequence and coherence like that of words in a speech or letter.' Such fullness of emotion and spontaneity of utterance come, however, only to those who have steeped themselves in experiences of objective situations; to those who have long been absorbed in observation of related material and whose imaginations have long been occupied with¹ reconstructing what they see and hear."

¹ Dewey, John: Art as Experience. New York: Milton, Balch and Co., 1934. p. 72.

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Imperceptible though it may be, the building up of what may be called artistic readiness, cannot be wholly unconscious. When this readiness is achieved, the artist is most himself and his work has within it a sureness and a rightness that distinguish it from the experimental or exploratory, earnest though such efforts have been.

In the finest and most characteristic poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, the artistic synthesis of outer and inner life is triumphantly achieved. This is not to say, of course, that they are, in themselves, without conflict, but rather that the artist has successfully and completely carried experience through personality into creation. Art in any form must always evolve thus if it is to have the power of recurrent freshness. A glance at the poems which represent Hopkins's most mature achievement serves to show that they are, for the most part, short; and it may be concluded, therefore, that the poet was most at home with himself when expressing a moving impression with compression and intensity. The organic unity of thought and climactic structural unity demanded by the sonnet make it Hopkins's most natural form. Occasionally, even this concentrated pattern is too extensive for the swift vigor of his creative genius which whips off four lines from the sonnet's conventional fourteen, leaving a curtail sonnet of ten full lines and a short eleventh, as in Pied Beauty. In this connection it may be observed that theory and per-

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formance coincide, for the poet's Platonic dialogue On the Origin of Beauty, written at Oxford, contains the following observation upon sonnet writing: (The artist, Middleton, is speaking,)

"'Pathos or majesty, I should imagine, demand some considerable emphasis; you could hardly have them given casually: while on the other hand over emphasis is painful, sensational, if you understand me.'

"'Quite' said the Professor. 'Sonnetwriting demands this feeling you speak of. A sonnet should end, or at all events may very effectively end, with a vigorous emphasis. Shakespeare's end with an emphasis of pathos impressed in a rhyming couplet. I would use these as a strong instance of the relative character of beauty. On the one hand the sonnet would lose if you put two other lines instead of that couplet at the end; on the other the couplet would lose if quoted apart, so as to be without the emphasis which has been gathering through the sonnet and then delivers itself in those two lines seen by the eye to be final or read by the voice with a deepening of note and slowness of delivery.'"¹

The student had already seized upon the vigor and emphasis which were to be so essential to the compositions of the poet.

The group of poems which will shortly be discussed in some detail contains a variety of experience which surprises those with a preconceived notion of the barrenness and narrowness of the monastic life. It is this variety which is responsible for the erroneous judg-

¹ House, Humphrey, editor: Notebooks and Papers, pp.70-71.

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It is easy to imagine that the sensitiveness which is so clear in the life of Hopkins produced a sympathy which must have endeared him to those with whom he labored, particularly in cases like this, of personal relationship.

More of the "matter to write on" which he found in his "professional experience" is expressed in Brothers. In the same letter which told Bridges the story of The Handsome Heart, Hopkins first mentions this poem:

"I hope to enclose a little scene that touched me at Mount St. Mary's. It is something in Wordsworth's manner; which is, I know, inimitable and unapproachable, still I shall be glad to know if you think it a success, for pathos has a point as precise as jest has and its happiness 'lies ever in the ear of him that hears, not in the mouth of him that makes.'"²

The poet's critical sense forced him to change his original intention with regard to the form of the poem, as a letter of the following year (1880) indicates:

"The Brothers was rather suggested by Wordsworth than Patmore. It was first written in stanzas in Wordsworth's manner, but when I compared it with his inimitable simplicity and gravity I was disgusted and meant to destroy it, till the thought struck me of changing the meter, which made it do I shall enclose a corrected version. The incident took place at Mount St. Mary's in Derbyshire."³

1 Letters to Bridges, Introduction, p. XXX.

2 Ibid., p. 86.

3 Ibid., p. 106.

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The poem was apparently, much "worked over", for in 1881, it is mentioned again in a letter, this time to Canon Dixon: "The Brothers I have rewritten in deference to both yours and Bridges' criticisms and now he is not satisfied and wishes it back again."¹ Hopkins was sub-minister and teacher for a brief time at Mt. Saint Mary's, Chesterfield, before going to Stonyhurst, and the sympathy for boyish feeling which is shown in Brothers will go straight to the heart of any teacher. The story is of the love and pride of Henry, the elder brother, for young John who has been given a part in a Shrovetide play. On the night when the play is presented, Henry beckons Hopkins to sit beside him, and the teacher finds the lad's "byplay" more touching than the play itself. Unconscious of his seatmate's covert scrutiny, Henry is in the throes of anxiety; he "smiled, blushed, and bit his lip; Or drove Clutched hands down through clasped knees." As for John himself, he is feeling no anxiety; he is "brassbold". Through two long acts Henry must endure his loving torment, before John's cue comes. And then, at the very climax for which he has been eating out his heart, he cannot, he dare not look! But he hears his brother's voice ring out in clear, bold tones, and then the fever that has been burning away inside the dear, boyish heart of Henry finds relief in tears whose

¹ Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon, p. 49.

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shame must be hidden in hands. The little drama that he has watched consoles the poet with the thought of such natural kindness as Henry's, in the midst of contrary evidences that nature is "bad, base, blind". The telling of the story is excellently timed; it gathers speed straight through to the climax, forging all details into the central pattern. The first version of the poem, in Wordsworthian stanzas, must have lacked the quickness which the three-foot lines of the final form give.

Spring and Fall: to a young child, has the flavor of personal experience, but we have the poet's word that that was not its source. Upon sending the poem to Bridges, he comments: "I enclose a little piece composed since I began this letter, not founded on any real incident."¹ However, the poet's imagination is sufficient to give reality to the child "Margaret" who is grieving as she watches the trees shedding their leaves, "Goldengrove unleaving". The sensitiveness of the child moves the poet, her concern, which values the things of nature as highly as the things of man. Then comes the thought of how life will react upon this sensitiveness. The sense of loss will enter experience so often that the heart will grow hardened to it, "nor spare a sigh" though worlds of dim trees be surrounded by the piled-up morsels of decaying leaves; but

¹ Letters to Bridges, p. 109.

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there will be sorrow in life and a searching of the reasons for it. Often there comes an inexplicable sadness - with the fading of autumn, at twilight, upon awakening in lonely darkness - that gives life an undertone of unaccountable melancholy. And the poet says:

"Sorrow's springs are the same.

.....

It is the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for."

Mind cannot grasp, nor mouth express the source of sorrow, but heart and spirit are stirred by awareness of it. Within these deeper places lies the consciousness of the individual's being at one with all the evanescent scheme of things, part of the eternal pattern of ebb and flow in which the walls of intrinsic self must finally break down and yield to the inevitable order. In general, the thought of the poem is not obscure, although it is compressed. Two lines may be troublesome because of word order:

"Leaves, like the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?"

To spoil the rhyme and get the sense, the rearrangement would be: "Can you, with your fresh thoughts, care for leaves, like the things of man?" The final lines are an unmistakable foreshadowing of the poet's own melancholy days of the spirit, when "the blight man was born for" darkened and shriveled the earlier, more harmonious growth of the inner man.

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That foreshadowing becomes actuality for the first time in the tragic Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves in which the starkly-realized anguish over the loss of unique individuality cries out with the voice of despair. The entire poem is majestic, first in the description of evening which gives the sense of the operation of swift, untethered, universal forces, and secondly in the realization of life's bitter and inevitable evening. The first lines are like mighty organ music,

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"Earnest, earthless, equal, eternal, vainly,
voluntuous, stupendous
Evening strains to be time's vast, womb-of-all,
home-of-all, heart-of-all night."

The unmovable forward motion lays hold upon the reader with a sense of physical strain. "The fond yellow horn-light" of the early crescent moon is "wound to the west," the final notes of its song of being echoed dimly above the emptiness where it has set. The "wild hollow hoarlight hung to the height" already is faded in the waning of its ethereal brightness, as the first glittering of the heralds of night, the "earliest stars, early-stars, stars principal," appears. And earth, lovely, varied, individual earth "her being has wound, her dapple is at an end". Look down upon her and see how the dimness washes over all the bright radiant million-life, how the etched outlines crumble and fall into confusion, "astray or aware, all together, (each through other) in throng; self in self steeped and

pashed." Self-hood, the precious essence of individuality, is crushed into a great coalescence, "quite disremembering, dismembering all now." Not a vestige of day's variegated joy remains in the world which is night. And what warning does the heart find in this great transition of nature?

"Heart, you round me right"; you whisper to me the grim and fatal secret: As in the world of nature, so must it finally be in the world of man's being. There "our night whelms, and will end us". Above, the cruel "tool-smooth bleak light" is cut by the sharp-edged "beak-leaved boughs dragonish", against colossal darkness. And the "tale" the "oracle" of the spirit of man is chanted in heavy dull measured tones that fall like lead upon the spirit's fearful ear. "Let life, waned,

ah let life wind
Off her once skeined stained variety upon, all on
two spools; part, pen, pack
Now her all in two flocks, two folds-black, white;
right, wrong; reckon but, reck but, mind
But these two; ware of a world where but these two
tell, each off the other; of a rack
Where, selfwrung, selfstrung; sheathe-and shelterless,
thoughts against thoughts in groans grind."

For the individual (and these lines may be interpreted in strictly personal terms for the poet) even the heavy sacrifice of life in the tempting loveliness of the world cannot bring repose. Demons will torment the spirit in the moral "night"; self is the eternal prisoner of self, capable of achieving no satisfaction without, thoughts end-

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lessly circling in piteous, irreconcilable conflict within, to lacerate the spirit forever. The deep poignancy of thought, and superlative, living artistry in expression as they are found in this poem have stirred all who have read the poem thoughtfully. Professor Abbott says of it:

"..... the buffeting of his spirit by life's riddle, 'the blight man was born for', is best expressed in the tremendous and undoctrinal chords of Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves, where contemplation of night's mystery conveys to his haunted mind the terror of annihilation and reverses all his former joy. This poem is perhaps the masterpiece of his more elaborate style"¹

F. R. Leavis, who has interpreted the entire poem, writes thus of the conclusion:

"The run of alliterations, rimes, and assonances suggests the irresistible poignancy of the realization. The poem ends with a terrible effect as of unsheathed nerves grinding upon one another. The grinding might at first be taken to be merely that of "right" against "wrong", the inner conflict of spirit and flesh, and the pain that which the believer knows he must face, the simple pain of renunciation. Yet we are aware of a more subtle anguish and a more desperate plight. And if we look closely we find that Hopkins is explicit about it:

'black, white; right, wrong'

The first draft had 'wrong, right'; but he deliberately, and significantly, reversed the order. If he were merely "ware of a world where but these two tell' his torment would be less cruel. But his consciousness is more complex; his absolutes waver² and change, and he is left in terrible doubt."

¹ Ibid., Introduction, p. XXXVII.

² Leavis, F. R.: op.cit., pp. 185-186.

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Miss Phare also makes a contribution to the interpretation of the poem:

"In the terrible Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves he sees as in a nightmare the day - dies irae dies illa - when right and wrong, black and white, are categories from which nothing is excluded. The darkness, swallowing up the dapple of twilight, drowning all colors and all shapes, becomes to him a foreshadowing of the day of wrath as it was foretold to Aeneas by the Cumean Sibyl."¹

Unquestionably it is one of the most desolate poems ever written, and the reader cannot come from it without the oppressive realization that the greatest of personal tragedies is that in which the individual, who has sought peace through the severest kind of sacrifice, is yet doomed to suffer the tortures of an inner conflict.

Passing reference has been made to the poem Inversnaid and its expression of love for wild nature.²

Aided to some extent by Hopkins's letters, and further by conjecture, it is possible to observe the evolution of the idea into the poem. In 1879 the poet writes to Bridges: "I have two sonnets soaking, which if they shd. come to anything you shall have, and something, if I cd. only seize it, on the decline of nature, beginning somehow like this -

O where is it, the wilderness,
The wildness of the wilderness?
Where is it, the wilderness?

and ending -

¹ Phare, Elsie Elizabeth: The Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 13.

² See pp. 41 and 99.

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The wilderness of the wilderness?
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And wander in the wilderness;
 In the weedy wilderness,
 Wander in the wilderness." ¹

Apparently this conception rested in the mind of the poet, and no further work was done on the poem. Two years later, in 1881, Hopkins went to Glasgow, in August, to serve as a supply priest,² and here in Scotland, he was at last able to "seize upon" what would make a poem out of his "wilderness" idea. He visited Inversnaid, "where", as he recalls to Canon Dixon, "Wordsworth saw the Highland Girl".³

Scotland's rugged beauty seems to have supplied the force that brought the idea to realization, for the poem Inversnaid bears the date "Sept. 28, 1881".⁴ The lines that first suggested themselves were abandoned for a more fresh and vital expression which gives the 'feel' of the specific place where "wilderness" is still to be found. First comes the description of a tumbling mountain stream;

"This darksome burn, horseback brown,
 His rollrock highroad roaring down,"

and one is reminded again of Hopkins's rightness of observation. How little "brown" water is to be found in poetry, and how much in nature, if poets were but observant! And the mountain stream always tumbles other things along with it, rocks and branches and grass with its roots, so that

¹ Letters to Bridges, pp. 73-74.

² Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon, p. 52.

³ Ibid.: p. 65.

⁴ Notes to Poems: p. 112.

And wander in the wilderness;
In the woody wilderness,
Wander in the wilderness." 1

Apparently this conception rested in the mind of the poet, and no further work was done on the poem. Two years later, in 1881, Hopkins went to Glasgow, in August, to serve as a supply priest,² and here in Scotland, he was at last able to "realize upon" what would make a poem out of his "wilderness" idea. He visited Inverness, "where", as he recalls to Canon Dixon, "Wordsworth saw the Highland Girl".³

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First comes the description of a tumbling mountain stream;

"This darkness brown, horseback brown,
His rollock high and rolling down,"

and one is reminded again of Hopkins's richness of observation. How little "brown" water is to be found in poetry,

and how much in nature; if poets were but observant! And

the mountain stream always tumbles other things along with

it, rocks and branches and grass with its roots, so that

1 Letters to Gifford, pp. 73-74.
2 Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon, p. 32.
3 Ibid., p. 33.
4 Notes to Poems: p. 112.

the sound is not pure water-sound, but has a roar of more solid things. The swift water is patterned all over with the force of its varied motion, leaping and rippling so that its quick surface is "fluted" all over with upward and downward turnings, all the way to the lake-home. Then there is the motion where brook pours itself into lake, ruffling out, "A windpuff bonnet of fawn-froth," atop the ominous dark pool, dancing and twisting in a creamy swirl. The winding arches of the banks through which the brook has leapt downward are all freshly spattered and sprinkled with the bounding drops. Every plant within water's reach is fresh baptized. "Let them be left" indeed, the "Wildness and wet", for they sing the original song of nature, whose power of refreshment man's spirit will always need.

The undated, untitled sonnet which begins, "As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame" is a unified expression of one of Hopkins's most characteristic ideas, the meaning of self. Miss Phare remarks that "Hopkins evidently takes pleasure in the thought that every man is unique and that all his actions and words have an indelible and unmistakable character."¹ This is one of the clearest of Hopkins's poems. In it he seems to have achieved something of the "more Miltonic plainness and severity" which eluded him in *Andromeda*. His thought is that "each mortal thing" is continually expressing its self. Every motion,

¹ Phare, Elsie Elizabeth: op.cit., p. 12.

every sound conveys the individual inscape. It is part of the dragonfly to wear the dazzling glint of sun on his wings. The ringing sound of stones tumbled into wells, the sounding quiver of plucked strings, the voices of bells - each shade of meaning of the thing belongs to the thing. This is the essential distinctiveness of the created world which finds its most intricate expression in the human mind. If we glance for a moment at a passage from Hopkins's Comments on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola, we find his mind occupied again with this great concept of self:

"..... when I consider my self-being, my consciousness and feeling of myself, that taste of myself, of I and me above and in all things, which is more distinctive than the taste of ale or alum, more distinctive than the smell of walnutleaf or camphor, and is incommunicable by any means to another man (as when I was a child I used to ask myself: What must it be to be someone else?) Nothing else in all nature comes near this unspeakable stress of pitch, distinctiveness, and selving, this selfbeing of my own. Nothing explains it or resembles it, except so far as this, that other men to themselves have the same feeling. But this only multiplies the phenomena to be explained....."¹

In a world so individualized, so heterogeneous, there must be some kind of unifying principle which participates at once in the individual and in a purposive order. For the poet that principle is in the creative power of Christ in the person, which gives Grace and so marks the individual with the seal of God:

¹ House, Humphrey, editor: op.cit., pp. 309-310.

every sound conveys the individual message. It is part of the dragonfly to wear the dazzling light of sun on his wings. The ringing sound of stones tumbled into wells, the sounding driver of plucked strings, the voices of bells - each shade of meaning of the thing belongs to the thing. This is the essential distinctiveness of the created world which finds its most intricate expression in the human mind. If we glance for a moment at a passage from Hopkins's "Comments on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola," we find his mind occupied again with this great concept of

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"..... When I consider my self-being, my consciousness and feeling of myself, that taste of myself, of I and me above and in all things, which is more distinctive than the taste of air or wine, more distinctive than the smell of waterlilies or camphor, and is incommunicable by any means to another man (as when I was a child I used to ask myself: What must it be to be someone else?) Nothing else in all nature comes near this un-speakable address of pitch, distinctiveness, and selfing, this selfing of my own. Nothing explains it or resembles it, except so far as this: that other men to themselves have the same feeling. But this only multiplies the phenomenon to be explained....."

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"Christ plays in ten thousand places,
lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces."

It is not perhaps, overstepping the bounds of truth to say
that in this poem we have the most complete and unified ex-
pression of the philosophy which the mind of Hopkins found
richest in meaning.

Hipplesdale, designated as a companion piece

to In the Valley of the River, is close in thought to the
former poem, which saw man out of harmony with nature in
 Wales.¹ The poet found great beauty in his surroundings at
Stonyhurst College. From the roof, as he wrote to Bridges,
he could see "a noble view of this Lancashire landscape,
Pendle Hill, Hipplesdale, the fells, and all round, black-
ish but solemn and beautiful."² In the poem he speaks to
"Earth, sweet Earth, sweet landscape, with leaves
And lorned low grass,"

earth, which lacking tongue and heart, "cannot but be".
Earth fulfills its function superlatively well, however,
serving him who makes the loveliness of dale and reeling
river, beautiful bestowed without restraint, to remain as
they were created, or to become the prey of "rack or wrong".
And the heart of earth's expression is "in deer and dogged
man." He is the heir of loveliness, but not always a

¹ See p. 97.
² Letters to Bridges, p. 151.

worthy or responsible heir, being "To his own selfbent so bound" that he is careless of nature, ready, for his own interests, to strip earth bare of its richness, and heedless as well of the world to come. Heavy with anxiety at man's insensibility, it is no wonder that earth wears "brows of such care, care and dear concern". When he sent the poem to Canon Dixon, Hopkins explained the two peculiar word usages to be found in it: "In the sonnet enclosed 'louched' is a coinage of mine and is meant to mean much the same as slouched, slouching. And I mean 'throng' for an adjective as we use it here in Lancashire."¹ Thus "louched low grass" would be grass bent on lying close to earth, and "with leaves throng" has the sense of "athrong with leaves". The Canon was pleased with the sonnet and wrote to Hopkins: "I like the sonnet on Earth the Creature, which you sent, very much, as I do all your work: it has the rareness, the sweetness that is in all: & could have been written by none other."² Canon Dixon's sympathy and appreciation for his friend's poetry, as well as for the man himself, were great, and he expressed this affection by dedicating his Lyrical Poems to Hopkins.³ In his observations upon man's failures to live up to his environment, Hopkins seems to have the ability to be at once in the midst of his material and de-

1 Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon: p. 109

2 Ibid.: p. 110.

3 Ibid.: p. 138.

worthy or responsible being, being "To his own self" so bound" that he is careless of nature, ready, for his own interests, to strip earth bare of its richness, and heedless as well of the world to come. Heavy with anxiety at man's inhumanity, it is no wonder that earth wants "brows of such care, care and dear concern". When he sent the poem to Canon Dixon, Hopkins explained the two peculiar words as follows to be found in it: "In the sonnet enclosed 'louched' is a collocation of mine and is meant to mean much the same as louched, slouching. And I mean 'strong' for an adjective as we use it here in Lancashire." Thus "louched low grass" would be grass bent on lying close to earth, and "with leaves strong" has the sense of "strong with leaves". The Canon was pleased with the sonnet and wrote to Hopkins: "I like the sonnet on Earth the Creature, which you sent, very much, as I do all your work: it has the rareness, the sweetness that is in all: it could have been written by none other." Canon Dixon's sympathy and appreciation for his friend's poetry, as well as for the man himself, were great, and he expressed this affection by dedicating his Lyristal Poems to Hopkins.² In his observations upon man's failure to live up to his environment, Hopkins seems to have the ability to be at once in the midst of his material and de-

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² Ibid.: p. 110.
³ Ibid.: p. 108.

tached from it. This detached, diagnostic attitude, which never, however, gives the sense of the scientific or the dogmatic, may probably be accounted for by both the scientific and the priestly cast of mind. Both attitudes require an objectivity of observation coupled with the ability to abstract the essential elements in the particulars under observation.

Hopkins thought very highly of The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo, which was intended to be sung by a chorus of maidens in the drama on St. Winefred. The reader is immediately conscious of the strong musical movement, which is enforced throughout by repetition and refrain. The first chorus is that of the "leaden echo", and the maidens who sing it are seeking some device, "some bow or brooch or braid or brace, lace, latch or catch or key to keep Back beauty". They would have age kept from encroachment upon youthful loveliness; but they realize sadly that such a miracle as they desire is impossible. "Age and age's evils" will not be kept "at bay". Death and dissolution await the loveliest; and so the song takes on the cadence of despair. But the song of the "golden echo" interposes. There is hope, say the golden maidens; there is a key to keep back beauty. It is not here, "Not within the singeing of the strong sun or treacherous the tainting of the earth's air"; but "Somewhere elsewhere" is a place where all fleeting beauty "Never fleets more", where

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poses. There is hope, say the golden maidens; there is a
key to keep back beauty. It is not here, "Not within the
singing of the strong swan or presences the faint-
ing of the earth's air"; but "somewhere elsewhere" is a
place where all fleeting beauty "Never fleets more", where

there is "an everlastingness", "an all youth". And the key will be given when all the laughing, lovely attributes of youth, when "beauty-in-the-ghost", are signed and sealed and delivered, in the very moment of their young enchantment, "back to God, beauty's self and beauty's giver". With Him the form of beauty is eternal; every least shade of it is preserved and enhanced to grace its owner's immortality. When this secret is known, one need no longer despair, for though beauty may seem, for a brief, earthly moment to be gone, it is being kept, with "finer, fonder a care kept" than mortals ever could keep it. And where, ask the maidens of the leaden echo, is it that beauty is kept so tenderly? - "What high as that! We follow, now we follow." The idea of the song is wrought, it is clear, from that strain in Hopkins which calls out to youth to preserve itself by seeking and winning God's grace, but the expression here is more intricate and detailed, especially in the concept of resurrection, than it has been in former poems.

The correspondence concerning this poem between Hopkins and Bridges is extremely interesting. It is evident that the poet had written of his intention in the piece long before Bridges was permitted to see a copy of it, for two years elapse between the first mention of it and the discussion of the finished poem. The first words about it are from 1880: "You shall also see the Leaden Echo when finished. The reason, I suppose, why you feel it" (should?)

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"carry the reader along with it is that it is dramatic and meant to be popular. It is a song for St. Winefred's maidens to sing."¹ In 1882 comes the word: "I have finished the Leaden and Golden echoes and am pleased with it: I shall send it you when I have put the last touches; it would be rash to send it today."² Apparently it was sent shortly, and Bridges's criticism implied a resemblance to and imitation of Walt Whitman, against which charge Hopkins writes a most interesting defense, at too great length to be reproduced here in its entirety.³ He says that he has read a few of Whitman's pieces, and

"This though very little, is quite enough to give a strong impression of his marked and original manner and way of thought and in particular of his rhythm And first of the rhythm. Of course I saw that there was something in my long lines like his, that the one would remind people of the other. And both are in irregular rhythms. There the likeness ends."⁴

The exchange of criticism and discussion continues, and Hopkins, like a good craftsman, works for improvement.

"All you say," he tells his friend, "shall be attended to, but in some of your criticisms you are, I think, not quite at the vein or in the 'humor' of the piece. I find it a hardship to alter 'sighs soaring, soaring sighs'; I quite believed it to be a hit."⁵

The poet obeyed his instinct here, and the line was not

1 Letters to Bridges, p. 106.

2 Ibid.: p. 153.

3 See Letters to Bridges, pp. 154 et seq.

4 Letters to Bridges: pp. 154-155.

5 Ibid.: p. 158.

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1 Letters to Bridges, p. 106.
2 Ibid.: p. 108.
3 See Letters to Bridges, pp. 104 et seq.
4 Letters to Bridges: pp. 104-105.
5 Ibid.: p. 108.

changed. Bridges found difficulty with the lines,

"Nay what we had light-headed left in early the
were would
Will have waked and have waked and have waked
with the wind while we slept."

and Hopkins explained his meaning thus: "Nay what we
light-headed: etc. means 'Nay more: the seed that we so care-
lessly and freely throw into the dull furrow, and then for-
get it, will have come to ear sometime.'"¹ The poet's final

comment in this discussion shows perhaps that the poem had

been too much tossed about in his own mind by Bridges's

criticism and his reaction to it:

"Of course I do and must pay attention to your
criticism on the Echoes and everything else.
I am now, however, somewhat dissatisfied about that
place and have laid it aside for a while. I
cannot satisfy myself about the first line.
You must know that words like 'charm' and 'en-
chantment' will not do: the thought is of
beauty as of something that can be physically
kept and lost by physical things only, like
keys; then the things must come from numbers
multitudes; and thirdly they must not be mark-
edly obliterated. You will see that this
limits the choice of words very much indeed.
However I shall make some changes. 'Back' is
not pretty, but it gives that feeling of
physical constraint which I want."

No satisfactory changes presented themselves, apparently,
because the poem remains in the form in which it was written
previous to this letter. Perhaps Bridges's judgment of the
poem was not severe, after all, for Professor Abbott thinks

1 Ibid.: p. 155.
2 Ibid.: pp. 161-162.

that Canon Dixon's reference to having received from
Bridges news that Hopkins had sent the letter "a very
fine poem" may allude to the Rhodora. While one feels, at
first, that the running variety of word pattern in the long
lines is part of the musical stress, it also becomes ap-
parent that there is an intensification of the sense of a
breadth of the concept in a passage that carries as much as
this:

"Winning ways, airs innocent, maiden manners, sweet
looks,
loose looks, long looks, love-looks, gayest, going
galant, girgace -"

Mr. Leavis remarks that words are employed

"are capable of use for expressing complexities
of feeling, the movement of consciousness, dif-
ferent and urgent states of mind. . . . Such
devices may be used to increase the expectancy
involved in rhythm and change its direction,
to control movement, to give words new associa-
tions, and bring diverse ideas and emotions to-
gether, to intensify the sense of inevitability -
in short, to get new, precise and complex re-
sponses out of words."

The idea in the poem of the resigning of earthly beauty to
God struck Bridges as being ascetic, and apropos of this
point, Father Kelly has an interesting discussion of the
point of view of the religious life.

"The act of chastity," he writes, "is in giving
them" (feminine graces and beauties) "to God
without a private take-off for delectation; an

I Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard
Watson Dixon: p. 105.
S Leavis, F. R. S.: op. cit., p. 174.

offering with recognition of their beauty in the eyes of God, which is lovelier beyond all measure than their beauty in the partial eyes of men. This¹ is precisely the act of the present poem."

Although The Leaden and the Golden Echo is dramatic in intent and not, therefore, projected directly out of the author's personality, it is evident, especially in the song of the golden echo, that the mind, beliefs, and attitudes of Hopkins are the controlling forces of the thought. Here, as elsewhere, he sings his refrain of the perfect circle of beauty, from Source to Source.

The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air we Breathe has a purely religious symbolism, which naturally limits its appeal. The occasion for writing it is explained in a letter to Canon Dixon in 1883: "During May I was asked to write something in honour of the Blessed Virgin, it being the custom to hang up verse-compositions in the tongues (which sometimes are far-fetched, for people gravitate to us from odd quarters): I did a piece in the same metre as 'Blue in the mists all day'."² The metrical model was a piece in Dixon's Lyrical Poems. While Bridges was not sympathetic towards the religious point of view, he was apparently won by the artistry of the poem, for Canon Dixon writes to Hopkins: "Of the other poem which

¹ Kelly, Bernard, S. J.: op.cit.

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you mention, on Our Lady, it is probably the same that Bridges has mentioned to me, saying that it is 'admirable', 'Our Lady compared to the Air we breathe'.¹ In exposition, the poem is very highly wrought, presenting an analogy between 'Mary, Mother of Divine Grace', who enfolds the life of man with continuous grace and intercession, and the "world-mothering" air that surrounds, invigorates, and enhances every object and every particle of an object upon earth. Miss Phare points out that the poem shows Hopkins's closeness to the "conceit" mentality,² which characterized the seventeenth century religious poets. It is quite true that the piece has the same kind of effect of highly wrought artificiality; and for that very reason it is not typical of its author; nor should it be interpreted as embodying a deeply personal point of view. One of the conclusions which Miss Phare draws with regard to Hopkins's general set of mind seems to be based entirely on this unrepresentative poem. "By his intellect," she has written, "everything is seen as tidy, orderly, part of a pattern; the world as viewed in the light of Catholic dogma is a riddle solved."³ No doubt Hopkins desired most earnestly that the world might be for him a riddle solved, but there are far too many evidences to the contrary to

1 Ibid.: p. 110

2 Phare, Elsie Elizabeth: op.cit., p. 9.

3 Ibid.: p. 10

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² Phare, Blake Elizabeth: op.cit., p. 9.
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warrant the acceptance of the fact that it ever became so indeed. The poem is longer than the typical work of the author, the three-footlines and the rhyme, much more regular. Even for those who would not be attracted to the praise of the Virgin, there must be an ethereal, delicate charm in the poet's description of the air

"That each eyelash or hair
Girdles, goes home betwixt
The fleeci-est, frailest-flixed
Snowflake"

There is a breathing, luminous quality, almost enchantment, in the blueness of sky and the purity of clear air that exists with the blue yet apart from it.

"The glass-blue days are those
When every colour glows.

.....

Blue be it: this blue heaven
The seven or seven times seven
Hued sunbeam will transmit
Perfect, not alter it."

Sky breathes only an enhancing "bloom" over things of earth so that they show more fair; and air tempers the fire of the planets. To the Blessed Virgin are attributed powers like those of the all-enfolding air. She is the "robe" of mercy interposed between the guilt of the world and Heaven. To her supplicants she dispenses God's providence; She is that providence, and gives Herself freely to men. She is our spiritual mother, entering into us to disperse sin with grace, recreating Christ within us, miraculously, and

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with grace, restoring Christ within us, miraculously, and

He is the breath on which the spirit feeds, the true inspiration of better self. Through the Divine Mother, the Son is made actual; and it is She, then, that is our best atmosphere. Enfolded by Her presence, as by air, we are protected from the harshness of sin, and Her mild influence leads us to "patience, penance, prayer" through which the life of the Christian spirit achieves its sole, holy purpose. The entire spirit of the poem is reverent, tender devotion, and the Divine Mother has been given a reality of infinite charitable love that is as reassuring as the touch of a firm, gentle hand. One could wish that the Holy Mother might always have comforted the son who sang Her praises in this poem.

On September 1, 1885, Hopkins wrote to Bridges: "I shall shortly have some sonnets to send you, five or more. Four of these came like inspirations unbidden and against my will. And in the life I lead now, which is one of a continually jaded and harrassed mind, if in any leisure I try to do anything I make no way - nor with my work, alas! but so it must be."¹ The printed version of the sonnet To what serves Mortal Beauty is from a copy of the poem dated but a week before these melancholy words were written, and if the poet had worked on it at this time, he must indeed have been able to lose himself in his

¹ Letters to Bridges: p. 221.

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work, for the lines bear no dark trace of the mood of despair, which was beginning now to cloud the life of Hopkins. In the poem is reaffirmed his belief in loving the physical beauty of earth and men. Mortal beauty is dangerous in its very perfection of life, feature, and form; but beauty is good, and it communicates, in its perfection, its goodness and worth. Beauty stirs men's minds; it spoke in its own language to Gregory when he looked upon the English slaves and saw angelic goodness which the Church must claim. The urge for love and worship in man is divorced from its purpose unless it seek the self of beauty in man. It should be so simple to realize that loving beauty in man is loving the Source of beauty which is in every created beautiful thing. There is a higher beauty to be sought, of course, "God's better beauty, grace", which enhances all loveliness of form or feature, and it is earnestly desired that all may reach out for and absorb that beauty into the self. The thought of this poem is so close to the personality of Hopkins as it was expressed in his relationship to those whom he loved that it is interesting to examine with it his expression of a very similar thought to Bridges. The bond between these two, despite their temperamental differences, was that of deepest friendship and regard. In many ways, each revealed himself to the other without reserve, and the letter to which we shall presently turn was apparently written in reply to Bridges's

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expression of anxiety about himself, for he knew the discouragement of doubt of artistic power and needed sometimes to be comforted and reassured. No man has ever spoken more tenderly or earnestly of his love for another or the basis of that love than does Hopkins in these words to his friend:

"You seem to want to be told over again that you have genius and are a poet and your verses beautiful. You have been told so, not only by me but very spontaneously by Gosse, Marzials, and others You want perhaps to be told more in particular. I am not the best to tell you, being biassed by love, and yet I am too. I think then no one can admire beauty of the body more than I do, and it is of course a comfort to find beauty in a friend or a friend in beauty. But this kind of beauty is dangerous. Then comes the beauty of the mind, such as genius, and this is greater than the beauty of the body and not to call dangerous. And more beautiful than the beauty of the mind is the beauty of character, the 'handsome heart'. Now every beauty is not a wit nor has every wit or genius character. For though even bodily beauty, even the beauty of blooming health, is from the soul, in the sense, as we Aristotelian Catholics say, that the soul is the form of the body, yet the soul may have no other beauty, so to speak, than that which it expresses in the symmetry of the body But what is more to be remarked is that in like manner the soul may have no further beauty than that which is seen in the mind, that there may be genius uninformed by character."

Here follows a passage in which the poet remarks the lack of nobility in Tennyson, despite his great gifts, and Burns's difficiency of beauty in utterance to complement his manly character. The letter continues:

"Now after all this introduction I come to what I want to say. If I were not your friend I shd. wish to be the friend of the man that wrote your poems. They show the eye for pure beauty and they show, my dearest, besides, the character which is much more rare and precious..... Since I must not flatter or exaggerate I do not claim that you have such a volume of imagery as Tennyson, Swinburne, or Morris, though the feeling for beauty you have seems to me pure and exquisite; but in point of character, of sincerity or earnestness, of manliness, of tenderness of humour, melancholy, human feeling, you have what they have, not and seem scarcely to think worth having." ¹

Besides the revelation of affection, we have in these words the expression of one of the deepest needs in Hopkins's life, the need to find beauty. Again and again in his poems, has been observed an apprehension lest beauty not be preserved, and one wonders whether it is not possible that some breaking of the ties with beauty did not produce the desolation, the sense of tortured abandonment that marks the "terrible" poems.

A striving toward greater clarity and a turning away from the tendency to overload words, phrases, and lines with meaning are apparent in The Soldier. The first word "Yes," abrupt and alone, is somewhat surprising, but its meaning is clearly, "Yes, of course," "It is granted." In the octave of the sonnet, the poet answers the question put in the first line: "Why do we all, seeing of a soldier, bless him?" "Men in uniform," "redcoats,"

¹ Ibid: pp. 95-96.

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"care," with always some special glance of approbation; and the reason for it is that the heart identifies the man with his calling. It is a noble thing to serve flag and country and we want to believe there is nobility in those who wear the proud insignia. We want to find "all" within the man "as sterling" as what flashes on the eye is "smart." The "scourge" must wait for us the "express" "spirit of war." The scouter now draws a comparison of the soldier just visualized with Christ, who also "knows war," served this soldiering through. "He knows the ways of soldiers and sailors." "He of all can handle a rope best." He has been in the buffet and activity of life; and He has entered into all the busy experience of humankind. And so there is a very strong bond between Christ and men who labor stoutly. When such a man puts all his heart and being into the accomplishment of some sturdy activity, Christ cannot refrain from applauding the hardy endeavor, and

"For love he leans forth, needs his back must
fall on, kiss,
And cry 'A Christ-dane deed!'"

And were Christ to "come over again" it would be in just such perfection of strength in doing what was to be done. The poem, as printed, has an instance of the changing of a word by Bridges. Hopkins had written, "He of all can weave a rope best" in describing Christ's knowledge of the sailor's task. "Weave" is replaced by

"handle" in the poem, because of the obscurity of the word, which, Bridges says, should be properly "reeve," if used with the dialectal sense "weave" or "bring together."¹ Perhaps the change was wise, but there is a flavor to Hopkins's word that is lacking in the substitute.

Had it not been necessary for the entire thought of Tom's Garland to be explained to Bridges, this epitome of Hopkinsian complexity and compression might still be unyielding rock to all intellectual hammers. As a priest Hopkins had known the conditions of life among the very poor. In the man, a strong sense of social justice was fused with the desire that England might approach more nearly the perfect state to whose life and progress all citizens have something to contribute, and from whom all deserve justice and a guarantee of the worth of living. It is the social sense that speaks in Tom's Garland, and for the interpretation of the poem one must turn to the poet, as he explains himself to Bridges in the letter of February 10, 1888:

"I laughed outright and often, but very sardonically, to think you and the Canon could not construe my last sonnet. It is plain I must go no farther on this road: if you and he cannot understand me, who will? It means then that, as St. Paul and Plato and Hobbes and everybody says, the commonwealth or well ordered human society is

¹ See notes to Poems, pp. 100 and 114.

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like one man; a body with many members and each its function; some higher, some lower, but all honourable, from the honour which belongs to the whole. The head is the sovereign, who has no superior but God and from heaven receives his or her authority; we must then imagine this head as bare and covered, so to say, only with the sun and stars, of which the crown is a symbol, which is an ornament but not a covering; it has an enormous hat or skull cap, the vault of heaven. The foot is the daylabourer, and this is armed with hobnail boots, because it has to wear and be worn by the ground, which again is symbolical; for it is navvies and daylabourers, who, on the great scale or in gangs and millions, mainly trench, tunnel, blast, and in other ways disfigure, 'mammoth' the earth and, on a small scale, singly, and superficially stamp it with their footprints. And the 'garlands' of nails they wear are therefore the visible badge of the place they fill, the lowest in the commonwealth. But this place still shares the common honour, and if it wants one advantage, glory or public fame, makes up for it by another, ease of mind, absence of care; and these things are symbolized by the gold and the iron garlands Therefore the scene of the poem is laid at evening, when they are giving over work and one after another pile their picks, with which they earn their living, and swing off home, knocking sparks out of mother earth not now by labor and of choice but by the mere footing, being strongshod and making no hardship of hardness, taking all easy. And so to supper and bed. Here comes a violent but effective hyperbaton or suspension, in which the action of the mind mimics that of the labourer - surveys his lot, low but free from care; then by a sudden strong act throws it over the shoulder and tosses it away as a light matter. The witnessing of which light-heartedness makes me indignant with the fools of Radical Levellers. But presently I remember that this is all very well for those who are in, however low in, the Commonwealth and share in any way the Common weal; but that the curse of our times is that many do not share it, that they are outcasts from it and have

like one man; a body with many members and
each its function; some higher, some lower,
but all harmonious, from the lowest which
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sovereign, who has no superior but God and
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neither security nor splendour; that they share care with the high and obscurity with the low, but wealth or comfort with neither. And this state of thing, I say, is the origin of Loafers, Tramps, Cornerboys, Roughs, Socialists and other pests of society. And I think it is a very pregnant sonnet and in point of execution very highly wrought. Too much so, I am afraid."¹

When it is observed, for example, that the concept of the perfect commonwealth as here explained at length, occupies but two and one-half lines in the poem, and that the fate of the outcasts is gathered into: "This, by Despair, bred Hangdog dull; by Rage, Manwolf, worse," it is quite evident that no one could find the meaning of the poem without the author's guidance. The poem is subtitled "upon the Unemployed," indicating that the emphasis is strongest upon latter lines of the poem, where the restless discontent of the "undenizenized" bodes ill for England. The poem rears itself as a barrier between mind and meaning that cannot be got over without the hand of the author all the way through. It cannot be placed among the author's best poems. It is interesting; it is curious; but it offers no real intellectual challenge, for hope of understanding dies immediately in the mind, and a challenge must carry with it at least even chances of victory.

Hopkins wanted Harry Ploughman "to be a vivid figure before the mind's eye"² and he is unmistakably

¹ Letters to Bridges; pp. 272, 273, 274.

² Ibid.: p. 265.

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1 Letters to Bridges; pp. 272, 273, 274.
2 Ibid.; p. 285.

that. The sonnet is a direct portrait of the ploughman, in which all the power of the author in detailed observation is brought to bear. The sturdy figure has been molded and shaped by its labor till every bit of bone, muscle, and flesh is bent to the strong motion that the labor demands. From head to foot, Harry's body obeys the impulse that fuses it with the plough. He might pose for a statue of labor. His arms are hard as the bars of the sheep pen; they are covered with "a broth of goldish flue", or fine down. The strong frame of ribs is like a gridiron; the flank is "scooped" lean by labor; the thigh is strongly-muscled; the hub of the knee strong; and the "barrelled shank" thick and sturdy from following the plough. All obey the "grey eye's heed", "one crew, fall to." The pattern of mounded muscle, the corded sinew, move in strong harmonious action to fulfill each need of labor. Over the plough Harry bends easily, smoothly. "Back, elbow, and liquid waist In him all quail (bend) to the wallowing o' the plough." Up comes his head when something in rein or rig must be tossed or pulled. The wind lifts his hair, "See his wind-lillylocks-laced". There is "churlsgrace" in the powerful movement of feet that are in a race with the plough along the fresh, wet furrow. Harry is all firm, fine, and strong in appearance and in action, clear and clean as the country air he breathes and the country earth that has shaped him. To see the picture it is not neces-

that. The count is a direct portrait of the ploughman, in which all the power of the author in detailed observation is brought to bear. The sturdy figure has been moulded and shaped by its labor till every bit of bone, muscle, and flesh is bent to the strong motion that the labor demands. From head to foot, Harry's body obeys the impulse that flows it with the plough. He might pose for a statue of labor. His arms are laid on the bars of the sheep pen; they are covered with "a brood of golden lines," or lines down. The strong frame of ribs is like a gridiron; the flank is "scalloped" lean by labor; the thigh is strongly-muscle; the hub of the knee strong; and the "parallel shank" thick and sturdy from following the plough. All obey the "grey eye's head," "one crew, fall to." The pattern of rounded muscle, the corded sinew, move in strong harmonious action to fulfill each need of labor. Over the plough Harry bends easily, smoothly. "Back, elbow, and lipids wait in him all dwell (bend) to the wallowing of the plough." Up comes his head when something is rein or rig must be tossed or pulled. The wind lifts his hair, "See his wind-lily-like-faced". There is "churliness" in the powerful movement of foot that are in a race with the plough along the frost, wet furrow. Harry is all firm, line, and strong in appearance and in action, clear and clean as the country air he breathes and the country earth that has shaped him. To see the ploughman it is not neces-

sary, in this poem, to master the grammar of every sentence; but it is interesting to observe an example of its intricacy, as in these lines:

" Each limb's barrowy brawn, his thew
That onewhere curded, onewhere sucked or sank - ,
Though as a beechbole firm, finds his, as at a
rollcall rank
And features in flesh, what deed he each must do - "

The subjects here are "brawn" and "thew;" the verbs "finds" and "features," and the objects "rank" and "what deed;" "That onewhere -" and "Though as a beechbole - " modify "brawn" and "thew", and "as at a rollcall" modifies "finds." Bridges's note explains the grammar of the last three lines: "the grammar intends, 'How his churl's grace governs the movement of his booted (in bluff hide) feet, as they are matched in a race with the wet and shining furrow overturned by the share.'"¹

The untitled sonnet that begins, "Patience, hard thing!" is one of the poems in which the troubled spirit of the poet is able to find some island of comfort in the treacherous seas that he traversed in the years just before his death. It is, perhaps, to be regretted that Hopkins confined himself to the sonnet form in these later years, but it is also true that concentration upon this form resulted in more strict and harmonious composition than is to be found in his earlier poems. The mind is able to

¹ Notes to Poems: p.116.

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"Each kind's barrow brown, his show
That onewere curled, onewere asked or rank -
Though as a peacocks firm, finds his, as at a
pollically rank
And features in flesh, what deed he each must do -"

The subjects here are "brown" and "show"; the verbs "finds"
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move through them more smoothly and is not forced to untangle the threads of meaning. In the sonnet on patience, the theme develops the idea with which the earlier poem Peace is concluded.¹ The thought is first of the difficulty involved in simply desiring patience. It is a hard thing "but to pray, But bid for," because it is the very nature of patience deliberately to seek the hard way. It "Wants war, wants wounds," forcing the self to desire the essentially undesirable. But only in the true nature of self-denial is patience to be found. The service of patience is healing:

"Natural heart's ivy, Patience masks
Our ruins of wrecked past purpose."

And beauty, as well as strength, grows from its roots:

"There she basks
Purple eyes and seas of liquid leaves all day."

The "purple eyes" of ivy raises some question as to meaning. Perhaps the "eyes" are the deep shadows among the thick leaves. If patience is rooted within, it is possible to ask God still to "bend" "the rebellious wills of us" "to him," though the pain of the heart as it grates on itself seems too much to be borne. The power of patience is so great because of its source in Him "who more and more distills Delicious kindness." Like soft amber honey, "Patience fills His crisp combs, and that comes those ways we know," those ways of weary times and tasks, of suffering and obedience.

¹ See pp. 107, 108.

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In the sonnet that follows this, "My own heart let me more have pity on," there is also some refuge and surcease from inner conflict. Hope and faith, though dim, have not gone beyond recall, and the spirit is still permitted their refreshment. Self addresses self in the poem, as reason calls for a truce in the struggle. "My own heart let me more have pity on," cries the reasonable self. Let this ceaseless circling of "tormented mind" upon "tormented mind" cease; recognize that this is a futile endeavor. The comfort that is sought can no more be found than can light by a blind man. It is time to "call off thoughts awhile elsewhere," to take things as they are, to "let joy size At God knows when to God knows what:" but hold in the mind that God's limitless knowledge tells Him what is best to do and when is best to do it, and contentment will come, and grow. God's "smile 's not wrung -" His favor will not come for agonizing after it. It comes when least expected "as skies Betweenpie mountains," to sweeten life with surprised joy. "Betweenpie mountains" is a lovely expression, though not quite clear at first. It is explained by Bridges thus: "..... 'pie' apparently makes a compound verb with 'between,' meaning 'as the sky seen between dark mountains is brightly dappled,' the grammar such as 'intervariegates' would make."¹

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In the sonnet that follows this, "My own heart let me more have pity on," there is also some refuge and succor from inner conflict. Hope and faith, though dim, have not gone beyond recall, and the spirit is still permitted their refreshment. Self addresses self in the poem, as reason calls for a truce in the struggle. "My own heart let me more have pity on," cries the reasonable self. Let this ceaseless circling of "tormented mind" upon "tormented mind" cease; recognize that this is a futile endeavor. The comfort that is sought can no more be found than can light by a blind man. It is time to "call off thoughts awhile elsewhere," to take things as they are, to "let joy arise At God knows when to God knows what:" but hold in the mind that God's limitless knowledge tells Him what is best to do and when is best to do it, and contentment will come, and grow. God's "will's not wrong -" His favor will not come for agonizing after it. It comes when least expected "as smiles Betwixt mountains," to sweeten life with surprised joy. "Betwixt mountains" is a lovely expression, though not quite clear at first. It is explained by Bridges thus: ".....'tis' apparently makes a compound verb with 'between,' meaning 'as the sky seen between dark mountains is brightly dappled,' the grammar such as 'intermountains' would make."

An interesting contrast in reaction is provided in the comments of Father Lahey and Professor Abbott upon the complex sonnet That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection. It is the expectancy in the mind of the reader that determines, in large measure, the effect of what is read, and the expectancy of the religious mind differs sharply from that of the literary mind. In his discussion of Hopkins as an artist, Father Lahey writes:

"Ten years after the writing of 'The Windhover', he composed his 'That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection', which, to me, seems to stand first among his triumphs and which also has the customary simplification. Its extraordinary ending has at last rivalled the serene exaltation of the close of Browning's 'Prospice'. Closely related to this sonnet is 'Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves' which is fraught with calculated rhythms and striking lines, but which is restrained and subdued; the two sonnets are like two soaring rockets, one trailing a blaze of light only, the other breaking into a cascade of stars."¹

Professor Abbott, on the other hand, as already has been noted,² calls "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" "the masterpiece of his more elaborate style", and adds "for the sonnet 'That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire', where the comfort of the Resurrection jumps out of the pattern, is not 'all to one thing wrought'."³ For Father Lahey, the poem

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2 See p. 128.

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is built for the Resurrection; for Professor Abbott, the Resurrection concept disorganizes the whole. That the very concept of the Resurrection is in itself beautiful, at any time and in anyone's words, may be freely granted, and it naturally had tremendous significance for Hopkins. Professor Abbott's judgment, however, seems to be more accurate than Father Lahey's, since, with the exception of the final stirring words, the poem is stronger in its realization of Nature's Heraclitean Fire than in that of the Resurrection. There is, in fact, one line in the Resurrection poetry in which, most extraordinarily, Hopkins is but one remove from the cliché:

"Across my foundering deck shone
A beacon, an eternal beam."

Unlike nearly every other line from Hopkins's pen, this might have been written by almost any capable poet. To turn, in more detail, to the poem and its meaning, the first nine lines are the drama of multiplicity of changing activity in nature. Such a realization of the eternal flux and mutability of the natural world would have delighted Heraclitus himself. First is seen the maze of motion in the sky where

"Cloud-puffball, torn tufts, tossed pillows flaunt
forth, then chevy on an air-
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Years of observation of the ways of cloud and wind had prepared for this "chevying", or swift running, of cloud forms in infinite patterns. Down the surface of the heavens race

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"Across my towering deck alone
A person, an eternal beam."

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Years of observation of the ways of cloud and wind had prepared for this "cheery", or swift running, of cloud forms in infinite patterns. Down the surface of the heavens race

the clouds to meet earth "wherever an elm arches", and the pattern of motion becomes more intricately woven as

"Shivelights and shadowtackle in long
lashes lace, lance, and pair."

In and around the tree the "shives", or fragments, of light are in a darting dance with all the varied gear, the "tackle" of the shadows; they intertwine, they strike against each other, they march sedately side by side. And the wind, in romping splendor, is busy about and upon the earth, erasing from its surface all trace of "yestertempest's creases". He blows upon the moist places and soon there is dust; he grips the marks and prints that man has made in earth and holds them to their mold. Everywhere, in every earthly thing, "Million-fueled, nature's bonfire burns on." Then the thought turns to man, nature's "clearest saved spark", and how death swallows up all his living brightness, quenches utterly, beyond remembrance, every smallest flicker of his flame. Here the poem breaks abruptly, with "Enough! the Resurrection, A heart's clarion", and hope returns. The trumpet sounds, and man's soul is triumphant. The great bonfire of nature may have spent itself completely; but the fire of man's soul leaps and darts in eternal sunlight.

"This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood,
immortal diamond,
Is immortal diamond."

In million-faceted brilliance, never to be quenced, the

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The sonnet in honor of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, Laybrother of the Society of Jesus, written "upon occasion" comes off remarkably well. The occasion is explained by Hopkins in a letter to Bridges on October 3, 1888:

"I ask your opinion of a sonnet written to order on the occasion of the first feast since his canonisation proper of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, a laybrother of our Order, who for 40 years acted as hall-porter to the College of Palma in Majorca: he was, it is believed, much favored by God with heavenly lights and much persecuted by evil spirits. The sonnet (I say it snorting) aims at being intelligible.

"And please do not put it aside 'for further neglect' but answer smart. It has to go to Majorca.

"Call in the Canon, have a consultation, sit, and send result by return - or soon." ¹

The thought of the sonnet is clearly expressed: "Honour is flashed off exploits, so we say". Glorious deeds, battles won, heroic martyrdom, are given their meed of tribute by the world. The unobtrusive exploits that write their story of struggle and victory within the doer, where they are hidden from the world, go unremarked. So it was with the humble Alphonsus. His life of the spirit was unknown, save to God, through Whose power Alphonsus's spiritual victories were won in all those years

¹ Ibid.: pp. 292-293.

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"That in Majorca Alphonso watched the door."

There is an interesting discussion with Bridges of certain lines of the poem:

"Yet God (that hews mountain and continent,
Earth, all, out; who with trickling increment,
Veins violets and tall trees makes more and more)".

Evidently Bridges objected to the "hewing" of mountains and continents, but Hopkins justifies his use of the word most convincingly:

"I cannot quite understand nor so far as I understand agree with the difficulty you raise about the continents and so on. It is true continents are partly made by 'trickling increment'; but what is on the whole truest and most strikes us about them and mountains is that they are made what we see them by trickling decrements, by detrition, weathering, and the like. And at any rate whatever is markedly featured in stone or what is like stone is most naturally said to be hewn, and to shape, itself, means in old English to hew and the Hebrew "bara" to create, even properly means to hew. But life and living things are not naturally said to be hewn; they grow, and their growth is by trickling increment."¹

In the commonly accepted sense of the word, Hopkins can scarcely be called one of our "reasonable" poets; yet in discussions such as that above, of the knowledge or learning that bulwarks his thoughts, he is disclosed as one of our most "reasoned" and "reasoning" writers.

The very discouragement of unproductive effort is the theme of the sonnet, "Justus quidem tu es

¹ Ibid.: pp. 296-297.

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Domine, si disputem tecum." It asks the old, old question, "Why do the ways of the wicked prosper and good men go unrewarded?" The poet has given to God the thoughts and devoted endeavors of years, yet he is vexed by disappointment. It does not seem that, were God his enemy rather than his friend, He could visit upon him worse thwarting and defeat. In careless moments, the heedless and sinful find more joy than has come to his lifetime of service in God's cause. All around nature flaunts in burgeon and bloom of thick-leaved wild plant, motioned by fresh wind. Year after year birds build anew; only, it seems in all this living world there is one barren stalk. The man and the poet alike feel their unfruitfulness; life brings no satisfaction to the spirit, no sense of his meaning achieved to the artist. He is "Time's eunuch, and not breed one work that wakes." Desperately he cries out for life-giving nourishment to send through him the impulse of true creation:

"Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain."

The poem is of a piece with the almost constant mood of depression which weighted those last months, in 1889, of the poet's life.

Of the sonnet dedicated to himself, Bridges writes: "This, the last poem sent to me, came on April 29."¹ In little more than a month his friend was dead.

¹ Notes to Poems: p. 118.

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22." In little more than a month his friend was dead.

The poem aims at explaining to Bridges why Hopkins is unable to achieve the created perfection in his poetry of these later days which had shown its fires earlier and which Bridges does not want his friend's verse to lose. It is artist addressing understanding artist in the octave as he explains the process of artistic creativity. First comes "The fine delight that fathers thought." This is the inspiration, which, for a moment, is "live and lancing like the blowpipe flame", and is swiftly quenched. Within the mind its seed has been sown, and there the moulding into life of "immortal song" goes forward, for years, it may be. The mind is now "The widow of an insight lost"; the inspiration which began the life now growing within her has long since departed; but the intellect is wise to the purposes of creation and guides its growth surely and steadily. Looking back to the essential source, the poet explains that it is the inspiration which withholds its "blowpipe flame" from him; without that bright fire's first possession of the mind, no living poetry can be written, but only "lagging lines". If "The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation" do not move in his lines it is for lack of inspiration's vital impulse. And in the "winter world" where the poet now lives, "that bliss" is scarcely to be expected.

Into the fogs and glooms and bitter storms of that "winter world" this commentary now turns to examine the "poems of darkness" in which the essence of a man's

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spiritual conflicts is distilled. A search for certain causes of these tragic perplexities is, of course, impossible. From the poems, and from the testimony of the letters of the year in which they were written, however, certain general evidences emerge: of physical weakness, of mental ennui, and of spiritual stress which was the more cruel because body and mind could summon no energies to bulwark the struggle. In a letter written to Bridges on New Year's Day of 1885, Hopkins complains that he is "jaded"; and throughout the year there is scarcely a letter that does not make reference to his generally unsettled and unhappy state. On March 24, for example, he writes: "The delightful old French Father who teaches Logic here will have it that I am dying - of anaemia. I am not, except at the rate that we all are; still I could do (indeed how gladly I could) - as they say - with more life."¹

There are two references, dark indeed, in their suggestion of the depths that were being traversed: "I think that my fits of sadness, though they do not affect my judgment, resemble madness. Change is the only relief, and that I can seldom get." And later; "..... soon I am afraid I shall be ground down to a state like this last spring's and summer's, when my spirits were so crushed that madness seemed

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² Ibid.: p. 216

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I Letters to Bridges: p. 208
S 1935: p. 218

to be making approaches."¹ The vital sensitivity, which has been so much a part of Hopkins's success as a poet, now shows its other face, and experience is remorselessly impressed.

Into four sonnets the poet has poured an anguish so acute that the reader comes from them shaken, and at the same time astounded at the capacity for the soul's endurance. These are the poems numbered 40 (Carrion Comfort), 41, 44, and 45. Bridges says of the first that "this is probably the sonnet 'written in blood', of which he wrote in May of that year" (1885)², and the poet's own phrase well describes the terrible, physical sense of agony that is almost ground into the sensibility of the reader. In Carrion Comfort, the poet is fighting against Despair's efforts to possess him. He will not yield to feast upon its "carrion comfort", for the diseased morsels of Despair could only bring death to that spirit which he is struggling to preserve. He is weary and battered, but will "not untwist" "these last strands of man". At the very moment of defeat, there is still some weapon in the will to fight off Despair. There is still the self, the being, the form that determines existence; it is still possible "not (to) choose not to be." But why does God so persecute him in this exhausting con-

¹ Letters to Bridges: p. 222

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1 *Letters to Bridges*: p. 222
2 *Notes to poems*: p. 114.

flict? Why, in His awful strength of arm and leg and foot, does God wrestle with this weak and fainting mortal? Why "scan with darksome devouring eyes" so pitilessly; why search out with the terror of tempest? The reason is "That my chaff might fly; my grain lie sheer and clear." The harvesting of God is cruel; in it the soul has been beaten and flailed since the first moment it sought Christ, and, in Him, "Joy" and "cheer". And the perplexity that has baffled and tormented the soul is the question: In seeking Christ which road does his most secret being follow: the road that seeks peace for the soul, or that which seeks to bring joy to Christ, at whatever the sacrifice of personal contentment? To know his own desires, and to make those desires accord with what Christ desires of him has been the purpose of the battle that has well nigh exhausted mortal frame and mind. At the close of the poem, it seems as if the struggle in "now done darkness" is being seen in retrospect, but the very memory of it is torture that wrings out an exclamation of agony: "I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God." In the poem it seems that the man is drawing in a breath in a lull in his battle; that the "darkness" is not "done"; and that the enemy, withdrawn for a deceptive moment, will soon turn His fury once more upon the soul.

In the next poem, where the first eight lines are one long moment of pain, the conflict has begun again.

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It has become more terrible with the realization that this suffering never reaches the ultimate point of suffering, for in the very moment when it seems that no more can be endured, more must be endured:

"No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of
grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder
wring."

It is one thing to fight with the knowledge that the struggle must, inevitably, end some time. It is quite another to persist in a struggle that must, inevitably, continue forever. Now there is no pause to gather resistance. The blows fall, fall, in swift, eternal fury, upon the prostrate spirit. This is the struggle in which the striving mind toils up tremendous "mountains" and is hurled down "cliffs of fall frightful, no-man-fathomed", as it gropes for certainties and is plunged into doubt and terror. And finally the beaten spirit must seek somewhere its pitiful refuge, where it is left with but one thin, meagre thought to cling to: that the agony of life will end in death, and that sleep follows each day of heartbreak.

The sharpness of agony is not felt so much in the sonnet which begins

"To seem the stranger lies my lot, my life
Among strangers."

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their present environment can draw in no life-giving breath. He is the prisoner of estrangement; in his religious life he lacks the comfort of family sympathy; even in Christ there is not now peace, for Christ is tormenting his spirit. People are kind, to be sure, but he can feel no genuine fellowship with them. Life is hurrying past him, and his life is cast up on a reef, to stagnate. But worst of all is the knowledge that somewhere within him lies hidden the power of creativity in both the artistic and the spiritual spheres, and he cannot find it:

"Only what word
 Wisest my heart breeds dark heaven's baffling ban
 Bars or hell's spell thwarts."

This bitter frustration is all the more complex because he himself does not know whether the voice of this inner power has not yet spoken to him, or whether he has let its call go unheeded. Life, from which he had hoped so much fulfillment of purpose, has left him stranded upon beginnings that will never come to fruition.

The final utterance out of darkness is so deeply searching, in the personal sense, that it seems an unwarranted intrusion to put its meaning into words which can, in no way, approximate its utter desolation. It is the climax of spiritual strife and suffering realized in every quivering fibre of sensitivity. Everything that touches the consciousness is a reminder of, and serves to

their present environment can draw in no life-giving breath.
He is the prisoner of estrangement; in his religious life
he lacks the comfort of family sympathy; even in Christ
there is not now peace, for Christ is tormenting his spirit.
People are kind, to be sure, but he can feel no genuine
fellowship with them. Life is hurrying past him, and his
life is cast up on a reef, to stagnate. But worst of all
is the knowledge that somewhere within him lies hidden the
power of creativity in both the artistic and the spiritual
spheres, and he cannot find it:

"Only what word
Wiseest my heart breeds dark heaven's baffling ban
Bare or hell's a spell thwarts."

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intensify the discord within, as the spirit beats against itself which holds it prisoner. The weight of physical oppression is terrible, for this is the very night of the soul. Awakening in darkness pressed so close that it is like a great beast stifling one with the nearness of coarse, shaggy coat, the poet recalls the agonized hours of this night. In its bitter journeyings the heart has seen and suffered so much that it has been years, not hours, upon its rounds; and in the hours of darkness ahead it must go forth again. To lament, to cry for mercy brings no relief. Spirit and body are fused in suffering; the bitter taste of self is on the "tongue;" every particle of the physical self is loaded with the spirit's burden; and "Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours". No part of being can escape the condemnation of suffering. This is the curse of lost souls whose punishment is eternally to go on being as they are. And so it is with this soul that can find refuge nowhere: "but worse" for him, because he knows that peace is to be found - but not by him.

No greater tribute can be paid Hopkins as an artist than to say that he was capable of writing these poems. For the mind to have the power to take hold of material so terribly self-realized and to subject it to the discipline of artistic form is an achievement of the highest order, for every written word must have been a repetition of torture; but in a sense, it may be true also that

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the poems served as a terribly necessary refuge, and that the discipline and intellectual effort they demanded mitigated, in some measure, the suffering which they represent. Professor Abbott has put into words, thus, the essence of Hopkins's testament of sorrow: "These poems are salt with the taste of his blood and bitter with the sweat of his anguish, the work of a man tried to the utmost limit of his strength and clinging to the last ledge where reason may find refuge. Their authority and truthfulness cannot be questioned. Here, indeed is a chart of despair, agony, and frustration, made by one who still believes in the justice of God. That the chart was mapped at all shows how urgent was the need for self-expression to alleviate, even though it could not resolve, his conflict."¹

1 Letters to Bridges: Introduction, p. XXXVIII.

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pecially so as to include the sensitive second foot, it must be due either to great want of ear or else is a calculated effect, the superinducing or mounting of a new rhythm upon the old; and since the new or mounted rhythm is actually heard and at the same time the mind naturally supplies the natural or standard foregoing rhythm, for we do not forget what the rhythm is that by rights we should be hearing, two rhythms are in some manner running at once and we have something answerable to counterpoint in music, which is two or more strains of tune going on together, and this is Counterpoint Rhythm.

Sprung Rhythm is measured by feet of from one to four syllables, regularly, and for particular effects any number of weak or slack syllables may be used. It has one stress, which falls on the only syllable, if there is only one, or, if there are more, then scanning as above, on the first, and so gives rise to four sorts of feet, a monosyllable and the so-called accentual Trochee, Dactyl, and the First Paeon. And there will be four corresponding natural rhythms; but nominally the feet are mixed and any one may follow any other. And hence Sprung Rhythm differs from Running Rhythm in having or being only one nominal rhythm, a mixed or "logaoedic" one, instead of three, but on the other hand in having twice the flexibility of foot, so that any two stresses may either follow one another or be

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Spring Rhythm is measured by feet of from one to four syllables, regularly, and for particular effects any number of weak or slack syllables may be used. It has one stress, which falls on the only syllable, if there is only one, or, if there are more, then scanning as above, on the first, and so gives rise to four sorts of feet, a monosyllable and the so-called accentual Trochee, Dactyl, and the First Paean. And there will be four corresponding natural rhythms; but nominally the feet are mixed and any one may follow any other. And hence Spring Rhythm differs from Running Rhythm in having or being only one nominal rhythm, a mixed or "logaedic" one, instead of three, but on the other hand is having twice the flexibility of foot, so that any two stresses may either follow one another or be

divided by one, two, or three slack syllables. But strict Sprung Rhythm cannot be counterpointed.

Remark also that it is natural in Sprung Rhythm for the lines to be rove over, that is for the scanning of each line immediately to take up that of the one before, so that if the first has one or more syllables at its end the other must have so many the less at its beginning; and in fact the scanning runs on without break from the beginning, say, of a stanza to the end and all the stanza is one long strain, though written in lines asunder.

Two licences are natural to Sprung Rhythm. The one is rests, as in music. The other is hangers or out-rides, that is one, two, or three slack syllables added to a foot and not counting in the nominal scanning. They are so called because they seem to hang below the line or ride forward or backward from it in another dimension than the line itself.

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